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The end of all things

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THE
END OF ALL THINGS;

OR,

THE COMING AND KINGDOM
OF CHRIST.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

“GOD IS LOVE;” “OUR HEAVENLY HOME;”

“THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL OF CHRIST;”

ETC., ETC.

[James Grant.]

Second



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PREFACE.

IN bringing before the religious public my Second Volume on "THE COMING AND KINGDOM OF CHRIST," my first duty is to express my grateful sense of the exceedingly gratifying reception which has been accorded to its predecessor. In saying this, I do not so much refer to the extensive sale which my previous volume has met with,—though in less than six months it has reached a THIRD edition—as to the great and general attention which it has excited, and the number of letters which I have received from clergymen of the Church of England,

from ministers belonging to Dissenting denominations, and, indeed, from members generally of all evangelical bodies, expressive of the interest with which they had read the book, and their great satisfaction at the fact of its having been published, because they felt it was so much needed.

Nor is it my only source of satisfaction that the appearance of my first volume has thus been so warmly welcomed by all classes of the religious community. It has had the effect of turning back some who were on the high road to Millenarianism; of shaking the faith in that system of others who thought they never could have had a misgiving on the subject; and of leading a number of persons, some of them known to myself, to abjure Millennial notions altogether.

But as the testimony of Millenarians

themselves would naturally be preferred to mine on such a subject, by those who are believers in the personal reign of Christ, I would refer all such to the statement made by a Millenarian in one of our religious journals within six weeks of the publication of my first volume. The writer stated that it consisted with his personal knowledge that my work had entirely changed the views of certain Millenarians, and that it had greatly unsettled the minds of others. This Millenarian witness, who is a minister of the Gospel, very naturally concluded his communication to the public journal alluded to, by the expression of his regret that the volume should ever have been published.

Among the very numerous private letters which I have received in relation to my first volume, several of the writers made observations or asked ques-

tions. To the more important of these I have referred in foot-notes to the THIRD edition. But lest some of those I have answered may not have seen that edition of the first volume, I deem it right to mention the fact in this place.

It may be well to state that in this volume, as in my first, I have, in my opposition to Millenarianism, made use only of such arguments as have occurred to my own mind. The present volume, therefore, like the former, is, so far as relates to the reasonings contained in it, precisely the same as it would have been if no other author had ever written on the same side of the question. But I should be sorry if any one were to put a wrong construction on this fact. It would grieve me much if it were to be inferred from what I have stated, that I undervalue the works of those anti-Millenarian writers who have gone before me.

So far from this being the case, I shall feel it my duty to advert in my next volume to those arguments made use of by anti-Millenarian authors, which I may consider so able as to render their reproduction in my pages due to the important question to which they relate. I need not add that wherever I may make quotations from the works of other anti-Millenarian authors, I will acknowledge the source whence they are made.

I promised, in the preface to my first volume, that I should pay due attention to any adverse observations which might be made upon it before the appearance of my second. The first three chapters of this volume will be regarded as a fulfilment of that promise.

I had hoped that I should have been able to bring the leading things I had to say on the Millenarian question, in addition to what I had written before,

within the compass of this second volume; but I have found this to be impossible without a very imperfect treatment of the subject. I can, however, from the progress already made in my next volume, promise in the most emphatic terms, that it will suffice for the full discussion of the Millenarian question. This third and last volume will, I trust, be published in October; and if my own judgment may be relied on, it will, owing to the nature of the ground over which I shall then have to travel, be by far the most interesting of the three volumes. The statements which I shall have to make respecting the great diversity of views among Millenarians will, I feel assured, astonish those who have not applied themselves to the consideration of the question; while the character of many of the opinions entertained by some of the most eminent men in the

Millenarian body, will be shown to be so astounding, that they would be regarded as absolutely incredible, were I not able to prove their truth in the most conclusive manner from their own published works.

From this part of my concluding volume I confidently anticipate the happiest results, because it can scarcely fail, in many cases, to open the eyes of Millenarians themselves to the startling nature and dangerous tendencies of their system; while, I fondly hope, it will have the effect of preventing others from falling into what I regard as one of the most gigantic delusions which ever obtained a footing in the Church of Christ.

I will only further say that it is to me the source of much satisfaction to find that my first volume has been reviewed at great length in several of the Millenarian periodicals, because it is by a

thorough discussion of the question, in conjunction with an earnest desire to know and do the will of God in relation to it, that we can hope to arrive at the truth. I fondly trust that on whatever side the truth, on the important points treated of in these volumes, may lie, the publication of the series, when the concluding volume shall have been published, may contribute largely to that great and most desirable end.

LONDON—*April*, 1866.

THE END OF ALL THINGS.

CHAPTER I.

DR. BONAR'S ATTACK ON THE FIRST VOLUME.

BEFORE I enter on the consideration of the views entertained by Millenarians relative to the Second Coming of Christ, the First Resurrection, and those other phases of Millenarianism which, in the preface to my first volume, I promised to discuss, it is right that I should reply to the criticisms—and in one case worse than criticism—which that volume has had to encounter.

The one case to which I allude, in which my first volume has been dealt with in a manner which transgresses all the recognised rules of reviewing, is that of the attack made on the work in the January number of the *Quarterly*

Journal of Prophecy. This quarterly organ of Millenarianism—which, by a slip of the pen, in my first volume, I mentioned as published at three shillings and sixpence, whereas it should have been two shillings and sixpence—is confessedly conducted by the Rev. Dr. Bonar, author of “Landmarks of Prophecy,” and various other works bearing more or less directly on the subject of Millenarianism. Of course, therefore, the moral responsibility rests on him for anything which appears editorially in the pages of his periodical. The contents of every such article are necessarily his, whether directly proceeding from his own pen, or only appearing as endorsed and adopted by him. But I have the most ample reason for believing that the article in question was written by Dr. Bonar himself, and will proceed on that assumption. If Dr. Bonar should deny the authorship, I will, if I receive his permission to do so, publish a letter from him to myself, written immediately after he had read my book, and then leave it to my readers to decide whether or not there is evidence in that letter of his being the writer of the review. I might

have published this letter now, because it is not marked "private," but I think it better not to do so, as all of us occasionally express ourselves, in our correspondence with each other, in a way we would not do on more mature reflection. I may mention, in confirmation of my belief that the article is Dr. Bonar's own, that a Millenarian writer in a public journal, in referring to my first volume, directs attention to the review of my work in the *Quarterly Journal of Prophecy*, which he distinctly says is from the pen of the editor of that journal,—which Dr. Bonar avowedly is. But I again repeat that morally it matters not whether the article in the *Quarterly Journal of Prophecy*, was or was not actually penned by Dr. Bonar. It is published to the religious world under his editorial auspices and with his editorial imprimatur, and therefore is to all intents and purposes his.

To call Dr. Bonar's attack on my work an answer, would be a misuse of language. It does not, indeed, profess to be an answer to any one of my arguments. It consists of vituperation, and of something even worse

than that, from beginning to end. It is a continued sneer throughout its ten long pages. To the first paragraph, which may seem an exception to this, I shall have occasion to refer towards the conclusion of what I shall have hereafter to say. The second and third paragraphs, which I shall quote as one, are these:—"The volume is one rather of declamation than of argument. The author rambles; he does not reason; he seems to think Millenarians such a feeble folk, though somewhat numerous, and their theory so evil, that *argument* would be thrown away upon them and on it."

If the work be "one of declamation rather than of argument"—if the author "rambles" and does not "reason," one might have thought that Dr. Bonar would have contented himself with the opinion he had thus expressed of the book, and so have ended his notice of it. Yet, for some unaccountable reason, he proceeds through ten tedious pages to assail the work. It is passing strange that he did not see that this was slaying the slain; or, if he saw it, was it not worse than unfeeling,—was it not something like wanton cruelty, to go on through his

ten pages of closely-printed matter, hacking away at a work to which he had given its death-blow at the beginning of his article? Why so great a waste of time and talent on the part of Dr. Bonar? Why so prodigal an expenditure of indignation on a book in which there was nothing but declamation,—a work in which the author does not reason, but rambles?

But on this point I venture to say that no intelligent and honest Millenarian will be found who will concur with Dr. Bonar when he asserts that my work, whatever may be its other demerits, is one of “declamation.” At any rate no other Millenarian reviewer has said so, though the volume has been reviewed by a number of Millenarians. Neither, out of many Millenarians whose opinions of the work have been privately brought under my notice, has a single one spoken of the book as one of “declamation.” It is at least intended to be one of argument; and its arguments have had the effect, in various instances, of inducing those who were, up till their perusal of its pages, decided Millenarians, to abjure their Millenarianism, and to acquiesce heartily in my views

on that question. Among these there are some ministers of the Gospel; and if Dr. Bonar doubts my statement, I will furnish him with the names of some of their number. But, besides this, a well-known Millenarian published a letter in one of the leading religious journals, within two months of the appearance of my first volume, in which he states as a fact consisting with his personal knowledge, that my work had not only unsettled the minds of various Millenarians, but led others to abjure Millenarianism altogether. I should imagine that this fact is rather at variance with Dr. Bonar's assertion that the book is one of "declamation." I should think that before it could have accomplished the results I have indicated, there must at least have been some "argument" in it. Or if Millenarians can be driven out of their views by an author who "rambles" and does not "reason," their Millenarianism cannot be very deeply rooted in their minds.

But Dr. Bonar represents me as thinking Millenarians such "feeble folk" that argument would be thrown away on them. Does Dr. Bonar really believe this himself? It

would, indeed, be passing strange if he did ; and the fact could only be accounted for on the charitable supposition, that his memory must be so defective that he not only forgets the body of a book the moment he reads it, but that even the preface, as soon as he has perused it, passes away into the regions of perfect oblivion. Feelings of charity would lead me to hope that it is Dr. Bonar's memory that really is at fault. A contrary assumption would involve conclusions incompatible with that regard to truth of which, in the absence of positive proof to the contrary, every minister of the Gospel and every Christian author, should receive credit for possessing. In the preface, not to allude to what I have said of the talents of many contemporary Millenarians in the body of my book, I have said, "They are eminent for the greatness of their *talents* ;" "they are equally remarkable for their *gifts* and *graces* ;" "good and *gifted* men ;" "the *great* and good men that are to be found in the ranks of Millenarianism." All this, be it remembered, I have said of Millenarians in my preface alone. Does Dr. Bonar, then, speak in accord-

ance with the fact when he represents me as regarding Millenarians as such "feeble folk" that argument would be lost upon them? It is for himself to answer the question.

Dr. Bonar proceeds:—"We have no particular wish to be called Millenarians, nor did we ever imagine that we had a right to be considered such." After this statement, will it be believed that throughout the whole of his "Landmarks of Prophecy" he claims for himself, and those who hold his views, the title of Millenarians; and applies the epithet of Anti-Millenarians to all who, like myself, do not believe in the personal advent of Christ to reign on the earth?

I made a remark in my work to the effect that my belief is, that "the time will come when the Millennium scheme will completely collapse, just as it did in the third century, immediately after Origen made his attack on it." In reference to this remark Dr. Bonar says, "As to Millenarianism being extinguished by Origen, we have only this to say, that Jerome lived and wrote more than a century and a half after him, and he tells that he was

rather afraid to write against the literal interpretation, as most Christians (*Fluminos* is his word) in his day were Chiliasts." Dr. Bonar then goes on to say, "One can hardly imagine a statement more in the teeth of ecclesiastical history than that of our author."

That Dr. Bonar quotes the words of Jerome correctly I have no doubt, though I have not access at the moment to the means of verifying them. But Dr. Bonar himself will be ready to admit that the statements of the Fathers, either as to doctrines or facts, cannot always be depended upon. Jerome has never been regarded as an ecclesiastical authority. Eusebius, who wrote in the fourth century, and who is the earliest Christian ecclesiastical historian, is admitted to be a trustworthy authority; and he, as Dr. Bonar well knows, explicitly states that after the attack on Millenarianism by Origen that system was all but destroyed.

But probably Dr. Bonar will not be satisfied with the testimony of Eusebius relative to the almost total extinction of Millenarianism, soon after Origen's attack upon

the system,—speedily followed as that assault was by the battery which his disciple Dionysius directed against it. Will he then refuse to receive the testimony of Mosheim? The latter is, I believe, universally admitted to be the most trustworthy historian of Christianity in the first four centuries. Mosheim's words in one place are—"This opinion,"—the opinion that Christ was to come and reign personally on earth for a thousand years before the entire and final dissolution of the world,—“had hitherto,” that is, up till the middle of the third century, “met with no opposition; but now its credit began to decline, principally through the influence of Origen.” But if even this will not satisfy Dr. Bonar, that Mosheim substantially bears out my statement that Millenarianism was almost annihilated by Origen about the middle of the third century, aided by his disciple, Dionysius, surely he will not reject the admission of one of the ablest and most popular writers on his own side of the Millenarian question. The Rev. W. J. Brooks, in his “Essays on the Advent and Kingdom of Christ, and the Events Con-

nected Therewith," thus expresses himself on this point:—"One might conclude from the remainder of Mosheim's account that Dionysius had completely succeeded"—that is, had finished whatever Origen had left undone—"in overthrowing this doctrine"—the doctrine of the personal reign of Christ on earth for a thousand years. It is true that Mr. Brooks proceeds to deny the accuracy of Mosheim, while candidly confessing that such was his testimony. But he is very unfortunate in his denial, for it so happens that in the previous page of his work he makes an admission which, in effect, confirms the correctness of Mosheim, while, as a necessary consequence, he confutes himself. "All the Fathers before Origen, whose works are extant, and *some* who were contemporary with and subsequent to Origen, were Millenarians." Only *some* Millenarians among the Fathers after Origen! This is very different from Dr. Bonar's statement, that the great majority of the Fathers down till the end of the fourth century held Millenarian views. But this is not the only admission confirmatory of my statements relative to

the decline of Millenarianism soon after the assaults upon it by Origen and Dionysius, which is made by Mr. Brooks,—than whom there never has been a more zealous Millenarian. In the same volume from which I have already quoted he confesses that Millenarianism was “unpopular” in the early part of the fourth century, and ascribes its unpopularity chiefly to the conversion of Constantine, which took place in 313, and the protection he gave to Christianity. Mr. Charles Maitland, too, author of “The Church in the Catacombs,” and quite as zealous a Millenarian as Dr. Bonar himself, says in his other work, “The Apostles’ School of Prophetic Interpretation,” that in the early part of the fourth century “the Church in general abandoned the Millennium.” What then now comes of Dr. Bonar’s assertion, so confidently made, founded on the statement of Jerome, that Millenarianism was in a flourishing condition in Jerome’s day, or towards the end of the fourth century?” I think it is due to truth, if not to me, that Dr. Bonar should here candidly confess his error.

I might have quoted from various other ecclesiastical historians, whose authority in these matters is generally received, but that would occupy too much space. As for the fact, referred to by Dr. Bonar in connection with the Nicene Creed, as proving in his view that Millenarianism was in the ascendant among the Fathers till the end of the fourth century, I maintain that it is not to be regarded as of any weight. The first Nicene Council, consisting of all the then bishops in Christendom, sat in the year 325, and drew up that confession of faith, called the Nicene Creed, which is still used and read every Sunday in the Communion service of the Church of England. The last clause of this creed is as follows:—"I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come." He must have a singular facility for discerning Millenarianism who can detect it here. I know of no true believer in Jesus, and, what is more, no such person is to be found, who does not "look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come." But, say the Millenarians, to use the words of Mr. Brooks,

the Council of Nice thus expounds this clause of the Nicene Creed :—"The world was made inferior because of foreknowledge: for God foreknew that man would sin. Therefore we expect new heavens and a new earth according to the Holy Scriptures; the Epiphany and kingdom of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ then appearing. And as Daniel says, the saints of the Most High shall take the kingdom. And there shall be a pure and holy land, the land of the living and not of the dead: which David foreseeing with the eye of faith exclaims, 'I believe to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living'—the land of the meek and humble. 'Blessed,' saith Christ, 'are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.' And the prophet saith, the feet of the meek and humble shall tread upon it." I cannot discover the existence of Millenarianism in this exposition of the clause in the Nicene Creed which I have quoted above. There is not a single word in it which is at variance with a figurative interpretation. With that construction, which I hold to be obviously the right one, I can acquiesce in the exposition

of the clause in question. That such is the right construction I consider placed beyond all doubt by the fact that those of the Reformers—Latimer, Ridley, and Cranmer—who framed the Book of Common Prayer, men who were demonstrably *not* Millenarians, incorporated it in the public worship of the Church of England.

But I will not devote more space to prove the accuracy of what I stated respecting the effect which Origen's attack, in conjunction with that of his disciple Dionysius of Alexandria, had on Millenarianism in the middle of the third century. I fear some of my readers may think that I have already given more space with that view than was necessary. I might have rested satisfied with the fact that I had in my first volume quoted Gibbon, Neander, and other accredited historians, in support of my statement that Origen and Dionysius inflicted a virtual deathblow on Millenarianism at the period I have mentioned; but I was desirous of making the fact so demonstrably plain, that neither Dr. Bonar nor any other Millenarian, however ingenious, should be able to gainsay it.

I might here complain of the disingenuousness of Dr. Bonar in withholding from the knowledge of his readers, in the *Journal of Prophecy*, that I associated the name of Dionysius with that of Origen in the disastrous assault which was at this time made on Millenarianism; but I will let that pass, just as I will let pass the sneer that I am “ambitious of what he fancies”—not fancies, because historically proved to be a fact—“was Origen’s splendid victory over error. He throws himself into the conflict, though without Origen’s learning or logic.”

Dr. Bonar quotes what I said in my preface to the previous volume, where I remark, “To the end that Millenarianism may all the sooner cease to exist, it is the bounden duty of those who see it in the light in which it appears to me, to do all they can to bring about this consummation.” On this Dr. Bonar observes:—“That the result may be the more speedy and satisfactory, the present volume is to be followed up by a second.” “*The annihilation*”—namely, of Millenarianism—“*will then be complete.*”

The italics are mine. I give them in order that no one may fail to perceive the full force of Dr. Bonar's sneer,—so becoming a Christian minister in treating a question of the most momentous kind, and which is at this hour engaging the solemn thoughts, the most anxious solicitude, and the earnest prayers of myriads of the best of God's people.

Dr. Bonar says, in a previous sentence, "The author's object is to extinguish Millenarianism." To this remark, which, be it remembered, is made in his own words, not in mine, he appends this note:—"Yet at page 110 he" (the author) "writes—' Millenarianism is spreading rapidly !' "

The note of admiration appended to the last word is Dr. Bonar's. It is doubtless intended to denote that there was something supremely ridiculous in seeking to destroy that which was spreading. This extraordinary logic is Dr. Bonar's. True logic would, I should suppose, conduct to the very opposite conclusion. If Millenarianism be, as I have said I consider it is, a colossal delusion, and working incalculable mischief to the cause of Christ and of

souls, I should have thought that the rapid progress which it is making was the strongest reason which could be assigned why all who view it in the same light as I do, should make every effort in their power to arrest its progress. Had Millenarianism been dying out of its own accord, that would have been, I should imagine, the best possible reason for letting it alone, and allowing it quietly to expire; whereas I should have thought that the very fact of its spreading in all directions is the most cogent reason that could be given why those who view Millenarianism in the same light as I do, should make every effort in their power, not only to arrest its progress, but to accomplish its annihilation. In fact, I have distinctly stated in my preface that it is *because* Millenarianism is making such rapid progress that I have entered the arena against it.

As an introduction to his remarks relative to the question whether Dr. Chalmers was a Millenarian, or not, Dr. Bonar makes this assertion:—"The author, when he does not *know a thing, but wants to believe it, or to state*

it as a truth, frequently makes use of this phrase, ‘I have an impression that,’ &c.” In another place Dr. Bonar says, “The author gives forth as true simply what he *wishes* to be so.” Is Dr. Bonar aware of the gravity of the charge which he prefers against me in the language I have quoted? Is he conscious that I am here represented as wishing to believe, and to state as a truth, that which I do not know to be so? To such a charge, or, if the word be more appropriate, to such an insinuation, I make no answer. I leave the matter to be settled between Dr. Bonar and his own conscience.

With regard to the question as to whether Dr. Chalmers was or was not a Millenarian; it will suffice to say, that I did not assert as a fact about which there could be no dispute, that he was not a Millenarian. I simply mentioned that my “impression” was that he was not a Millenarian in the sense in which the word is understood by those who share Dr. Bonar’s views on the subject.

Dr. Bonar proceeds—just as if I had stated in positive terms that Dr. Chalmers was not

a Millenarian in *any* sense of the term—to show that he was a Millenarian in the same sense as Dr. Bonar himself. His first evidence of Dr. Chalmers's Millenarianism is given in these words:—"In October, 1827, Dr. Chalmers thus writes concerning Mr. M'Culloch, and his Lectures on Isaiah—"He is not a Millenarian, which I am, however, much inclined to be.'"

Dr. Bonar is unfortunate in this first attempt to prove the Millenarianism of Dr. Chalmers. That distinguished divine is here brought before us, in his own language, as only "*inclined*" to be a Millenarian. There is all the difference in the world, even Dr. Bonar himself will admit, between an inclination, or tendency towards being something, and the fact of *actually* being it. That a year after this period Dr. Chalmers was no Millenarian, is, to my mind, sufficiently evident from the fact, that, in 1828, namely, a year after the date of his letter relative to Mr. M'Culloch's Lectures on Isaiah, the Rev. Dr. Hamilton, of Strathblane, father of the Rev. Dr. James Hamilton, of the Scotch Free Church, London,

dedicated to Dr. Chalmers a work of his in opposition to Millenarianism,—a work which, I may here mention, I inadvertently spoke of in my first volume as being in favour of Millenarianism. Now, as Dr. Hamilton was on terms of the closest intimacy and warmest friendship with Dr. Chalmers, and most probably dedicated his anti-Millenarian work to that great man, with his permission, it is not likely that he could have been a Millenarian, as Dr. Bonar assumes he was from an incidental expression in one of his private letters in the year 1827.

Even, indeed, from Dr. Bonar's own showing, Dr. Chalmers seems to have made no further progress in Millenarianism for the long period of twenty years; for, says Dr. Bonar, "In 1847 he," namely, Dr. Chalmers, "thus writes to Dr. Bonar—'To the former (your prophetic views), I *approximate* much nearer than I did in my younger days.'" So that, after the long interval of twenty years, we find Dr. Chalmers, according to his own showing, to be in that state of mind on the subject of Millenarianism which is indicated by an

“approximation” to it. “Inclining” and “approximating” towards Millenarianism—the latter word being employed twenty years after the former was used—are very different things from being settled or established in Millenarianism. Here it is shown to be an unquestionable fact, under Dr. Chalmers’s own hand, that he was not by any perceptible degree nearer to Millenarianism in 1847 than he was in 1827.

In order, however, that the actual views of Dr. Chalmers on the Millennial question should, if possible, be placed beyond all doubt, I wrote immediately on learning what Dr. Bonar said on the subject, to the Rev. Dr. Hanna, the son-in-law and biographer of Dr. Chalmers. I felt that he was necessarily the best authority that could be consulted on the matter. I simply mentioned, in writing to Dr. Hanna, that I had just brought out a work on the Millennial question, entitled, “The End of all Things,” and had in that work said that my “impression” was, that Dr. Chalmers was not a Millenarian in the usually accepted meaning of the word, but that—without say-

ing by whom—it had been affirmed that Dr. Chalmers *was* a Millenarian. I then remarked, that I was anxious to ascertain how the fact stood, with the view of stating it correctly in my second volume; and that I would regard it as a favour if he would let me know whether he considered Dr. Chalmers to be a Millenarian in the same sense as Dr. Bonar is.

Dr. Hanna most kindly answered my note by return of post. The following is his answer:—"So far, I know Dr. Chalmers was not a Millenarian in the same sense as Dr. Bonar is, till his later years. During these years his views were modified; and though he was not *positive* in his belief"—the italics are Dr. Hanna's—"it certainly inclined towards a belief in the personal and pre-Millennial advent. There are, I think, passages in the 'Scripture Readings' which confirm this, but I really have not time to look them out."

I think that this letter from Dr. Hanna, who of all men in the world must have best known the views of Dr. Chalmers on the Millenarian question, ought to modify the tone of Dr. Bonar in holding up Dr. Chalmers as a

Millenarian. It is conclusively proved by Dr. Hanna's testimony that Dr. Chalmers was *not* a Millenarian in the year 1827, at which time Dr. Bonar represents him as having held Millenarian views; for it was not "till his later years" that "his views were modified;" and even then he had no *positive* Millenarian belief. He only, according to Dr. Hanna, "*inclined*" to a belief in the personal and pre-Millennial advent; and an inclination towards a thing is, as I have before remarked, very different from *positive* belief in that particular thing. It is not simple "inclination," or "approximation," towards Millenarianism in the case of such Millenarians as that of Dr. Bonar. They are as firmly persuaded, and hesitate not to say so, in the truth of their Millenarianism, as they are in any other portions of revealed religion. Dr. Chalmers had no *positive* belief in Millenarianism, and therefore Millenarians have no right to enrol his name on their Millennial list, notwithstanding Dr. Bonar's zealous and elaborate effort to establish their right to claim him as one of their number.

In opposition to the conviction which I have

expressed in my former volume, that Charles Wesley was not a Millenarian, though claimed as such by Mr. Cox and others, Dr. Bonar is at great pains to prove that he was. He grounds his evidence of the alleged fact, that Charles Wesley was a Millenarian, on certain phrases which occur in his hymns. These expressions may be classed in the category of those licenses of phraseology which are allowed to all poets. I have shown in my first volume that Watts, though no one ever suspected him of Millenarianism, might be made out a Millenarian if he were pinned down to certain expressions which occur in his sacred songs. As regards Charles Wesley, I feel satisfied that no further proof of the fact that he was no Millenarian need be offered than I have furnished in my first volume. With reference to the quotations which Dr. Bonar makes from Charles Wesley's hymns to prove that he was a Millenarian, a single sentence will suffice to show the erroneousness of any such belief as that of Dr. Bonar, if such belief have no better foundation than on those citations. In this way Dr. Bonar can be made to answer himself.

He quotes from the hymn, in page 378, the following verse, and italicises the second line :—

“ That place where once I walked below,
On Olivet I will appear ;
My bleeding feet to Israel show,
While those who pierced behold me near.”

No Millenarian could ever have written either the third or the fourth of these lines. In the third line Christ is represented as coming in a state of humiliation and suffering. The expression that he would show his “ bleeding feet to Israel ” necessarily implies that the feet of our Lord, which have ceased to literally bleed for more than eighteen hundred years, will again be seen in a bleeding state. It is surprising that Dr. Bonar, or any other Millenarian, could discover Millenarianism in the verse I have quoted, because the theme on which, of all others, he and they delight to dwell is the inconceivable glory in which our Lord will come from heaven to earth, when he appears in our world to establish his Millennial reign upon it. It is the joy and rejoicing of all believers in Christ that on the morning of the resurrection their vile bodies shall be made

like unto the glorious body of their Lord and Saviour,—a fact incompatible with the obvious import of the line in question of Charles Wesley. According to the views of Millenarians, we are to expect our Redeemer to appear in great glory to inaugurate his Millennial reign. How inconsistent then in any of their number to quote a line from a poet representing Christ as showing his “bleeding feet” to Israel when he descends on Mount Olivet, as a proof that the writer was a Millenarian !

The second of the two lines is even much more manifestly incompatible than the first with the alleged Millenarianism of Charles Wesley. That line is—

“While those who pierced behold me near.”

This line is also decisive of the question as to whether or not Charles Wesley was a Millenarian. No Millenarian ever could have written it any more than the previous one. All Millenarians—there not being one solitary exception—believe, as I have said again and again, that there will be an interval of a thousand

years between the personal coming of Christ to reign on our earth and the resurrection of the wicked. But here it is stated in the plainest language which could be employed, that on the occasion of our Lord's coming again personally to our earth, those who pierced him will "behold him near." Those, I repeat, who pierced Jesus will not, according to Millenarianism, see him for a thousand years after his advent to reign personally on the earth. It is clear, therefore, to demonstration, that it was of the general judgment, when those who pierced the Lord will see him, that Charles Wesley wrote, when he penned the hymn from which I have made the above extract. I ought, however, to add that Charles Wesley's line, "My bleeding feet to Israel show," is altogether wrong considered as a matter of doctrine or of fact, for our Lord will not, whether he comes Millennially to our earth or for the general judgment, "show his bleeding feet" at all. He will come in infinite glory.

A Wesleyan reverend friend has kindly called my attention to several of Mr. Wesley's hymns, all of which are as thoroughly antagonistic to

Millenarianism as it would be possible to conceive. The claims on my space for other aspects of the Millenarian question preclude the possibility of my giving all the proofs, that Charles Wesley was no Millenarian, which are now lying before me; but in order that he may no more be classed among Millenarians by the advocates of the pre-Millennial personal advent of our Lord, it may be right to give two more quotations from his hymns. Here is one from the 65th in the hymn-book as used in Wesleyan congregations:—

“Ye virgin souls, arise,
With all the dead awake!
Unto salvation wise,
Oil in your vessels take:
Upstarting at the midnight cry,
‘Behold the heavenly Bridegroom nigh!’

“He comes, he comes, to *call*
The *nations* to his bar,
And raise to glory all
Who fit for glory are:
Made ready for your full reward,
Go forth with joy to meet your Lord.”

The words which are italicised are quite decisive of the fact that Charles Wesley was not, and could not have been a Millenarian.

Those who are fit for glory are to rise when *all* the dead awake. It is not the saints only that are to arise from their graves at the second advent. The *nations*—meaning the whole human race—are to be summoned to judgment. What could be more conclusive in favour of a simultaneous resurrection of the righteous and the wicked?

My other quotation, which also, if it stood alone, would prove that Charles Wesley was not a Millenarian, is taken from the 327th hymn. It is as follows:—

“Jesus the righteous Judge shall come,
And all his wretched foes consume,
In flaming fire, revealed from heaven,
Assign their lot with fiends abhorred,
Far from the presence of the Lord,
To everlasting torments given.

“Then we whose flesh is troubled here,
Shall glorious with our Head appear,
And find our place prepared above;
And spend on our Redeemer's breast
A whole eternity of rest—
A whole eternity of love.”

Here the righteous and the wicked are simultaneously judged when Christ comes again.

I had written thus far when a copy of the *Wes-*

leyan Times reached me, containing an interesting paper by the Rev. Joseph Kirsop, an able Wesleyan minister of the United Methodist Free Church, in answer to the question—"Was the Rev. Charles Wesley a Millenarian?" This question Mr. Kirsop answers in the negative; and I venture to say that no one who reads his proofs will ever again rank Charles Wesley among the Millenarians. I confine myself to the quotation of one of the hymns, which is the 55th in the Wesleyan collection, which Mr. Kirsop adduces, and which he justly says, "positively demonstrates that Charles Wesley was no Millenarian":—

"Thou Judge of quick and dead,
Before whose bar severe,
With holy joy, or guilty dread,
We *all* shall soon appear;
Our caution'd souls prepare
For that tremendous day;
And fill us now with watchful care,
And stir us up to pray:
"To pray, and wait the hour,
That awful hour unknown,
When, robed in majesty and power,
Thou shalt from heaven come down,
The immortal Son of Man,
To judge the human race,
With all thy Father's dazzling train,
With all thy glorious grace.

“To damp our earthly joys,
To increase our gracious fears,
For ever let th’ Archangel’s voice
Be sounding in our ears,
The solemn midnight cry,
‘Ye dead, the Judge is come;
Arise, and meet him in the skies,
And meet your instant doom.’”

Mr. Kirsop adds, and I entirely concur with him, that “the prejudice must be almost invincible which imagines the writer of these lines could be a Millenarian.”

It is not necessary I should proceed further in furnishing proofs that Charles Wesley was not a Millenarian. I would not have entered into the matter at so much length but for the strenuous endeavours of Dr. Bonar to make him out a Millenarian. The question is now, however, fairly set at rest.

But the most extraordinary part of the course which Dr. Bonar has taken in relation to the views of Charles Wesley on the Millenarian question is, that before he devotes nearly the whole of one of his closely-printed pages to prove that Charles Wesley was a Millenarian, he expresses himself thus:—“As to Charles Wesley, it really matters little to us whether

he was a Millenarian or not." If, then, the thing was in Dr. Bonar's estimation of no consequence, one cannot help expressing surprise that he should have thought it necessary to waste so much of his time in endeavouring to show that he was, and thereby imposed on myself and others the duty of proving that he was not.

Dr. Bonar, among other things which he says, but which I can hardly believe he could himself have credited while saying them, represents me as exulting "in such an ally as Origen." So far from this being true, Dr. Bonar knows that the reverse is the fact. In repudiating all faith in the views of the Fathers I was especially careful to do so in the case of Origen, although his opinions on the subject of the Millennium were the same as my own. I have stated emphatically, in more than one part of my volume, that I attached no importance to the fact that Origen was an anti-Millenarian, and that, consequently, I would never think of quoting him in support of my anti-Millenarian views. How, in the face of this, Dr. Bonar could represent me as

exulting in such an ally as Origen, it is for himself to explain.

Dr. Bonar in some places expresses himself in such a way as that there is danger of his language being mistaken for mine. He speaks, for instance, of my belief "in the certainty of the bursting of the Millennium bubble." I should be exceedingly grieved if the paternity of such language as this were ascribed to my pen. I should be sorry indeed if I ever made use of such phraseology in speaking of the Millennium. The language is Dr. Bonar's, and his alone. Though differing from the Millenarians, I regard the subject as too sacred and solemn to be capable of employing such language in reference to it as "the bursting of the Millennium bubble." It has been my earnest endeavour in what I have written on the Millennial question, and will be, I trust, in what I may still have to say on the subject, to approach its varied phases with that profound reverence which becomes so momentous a question. Anything like levity or irreverence in discussing so solemn and sacred a subject would seem to me sufficient to sadden one's soul.

Dr. Bonar quotes a passage from my book in which I had stated that Millenarians, rather than give up their favourite literal interpretation principle, were prepared to confess that Paul was mistaken in those parts of his epistles in which he asserted that the Lord was at hand, and in those other parts in which he exhorted the Christians to whom his letters were addressed to prepare for Christ's immediate advent to our earth, as the preliminary step to his Millennial reign on it for a thousand years. Having made his quotation from my book, Dr. Bonar exclaims, "In the name of all the Millenarians with whom we have been acquainted these many years we utterly reject the above statement. It contains the reverse of truth. Millenarians ready to give up the inspiration of the Scriptures! Who and where are they? let them be named. The author's personal knowledge may do for himself—it will not do for the class here libelled." To "name" *publicly* parties who have spoken in the confidence of private conversation, is a thing of which I trust I will never be guilty. But I will make this proposal to Dr. Bonar—

if he will assure me that he never met any Millenarians who were fully persuaded in their own minds that when Paul said to certain Christians of his day, "The Lord is at hand," and otherwise prepared them to expect his immediate advent, he *did* expect Christ's immediate advent, and consequently laboured under a mistake, I will at once give him in a private note the names of some of the most eminent Millenarians of the present day—parties who, from their high social position, are extensively known beyond the limits of religious circles,—some of them to Dr. Bonar himself. What is more, I will mention to Dr. Bonar the names of distinguished Millenarians who, not only since the appearance of my first volume and the publication of his attack on it, have in a discussion with me affirmed, in the presence of fourteen or fifteen Millenarians, that Paul did mistakenly believe that the Lord would come, in his day, to reign personally on earth, and that not one of these Millenarians—more than twelve in number—dissented from the conviction, so absolutely and confidently expressed, that Paul did fully

expect that in his day the Lord would come personally to our world to establish his Millennial reign upon it. If, therefore, Paul did believe what he asserted respecting Christ's Millennial personal coming, and events proved that he was mistaken, there is no escaping the alternative, that he was not inspired when he affirmed the immediate coming of Christ, because no one speaking under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of *truth*, could have affirmed or said that which was soon proved to have been contrary to the fact. On the occasion in question, I stood literally alone in maintaining that Paul was not mistaken himself in what he said respecting the advent of our Lord, but that he had been misunderstood by those to whom he addressed his letters. I endeavoured to prove, from his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, that he never believed in the personal coming of Christ in his or their day. I was, therefore, the only one in this Millenarian gathering—all excellent Christians—who in reality upheld the great principle of the absolute and universal inspiration of the Scriptures.

I have before said, and any one who reads Dr. Bonar's article will see, that he has not touched one single argument against Millenarian views which I have advanced. What, then, it will be asked, does he do? I have said that he commences, continues, and concludes his attack on my book in such a sneering and snappish spirit as is rarely to be met with in controversy, even on purely secular subjects. Is there, then, the question will recur, no argument at all in Dr. Bonar's attack on my work? None—literally none. I say it with all seriousness, and any one who will take the trouble to consult his article will see a verification of my words, that there is not even the semblance of argument in opposition to my leading positions. More than this, he does not so much as state or indicate what my principal points are. His "logic" simply consists, incredible as the statement may appear, in showing that a few names of authors and of places have been misspelt. The name Bridge has been made Budge, Kilsall is printed for Kelshall, Newcombe for Newcome, Vitingra for Vitringa, Gerrard Noel for Gerard Noel, &c.

Now there is something truly painful in seeing a man like Dr. Bonar resorting to anything so very little as this. As an author himself, he knows as well as I do that these are purely clerical or printer's errors. But even if the misspelling of a few names and places could be brought home to the author, what could that have to do with the arguments made use of in the book? I will only further say on this part of the subject, that some of Dr. Bonar's greatest friends have expressed to me their amazement that he could have brought himself to have recourse to an expedient, in dealing with an opponent, so very unworthy a Christian divine, and to which even the veriest man of the world would deem it utterly beneath him to resort. He speaks of my book as being, in his own elegant phraseology, stuck all through with "littlenesses." I venture to say that neither in my volume nor in that of any other Christian writer, could he point out a "littleness" so truly little as to make the misspelling by a printer of the name of an author, or the name of a place, a grave charge against the author, and a conclusive argument

against his book, when he had no more to do with such misprints than Dr. Bonar himself.

But I will not proceed further in adverting to Dr. Bonar's extraordinary attack on my book. There is not, I repeat, a single attempt made, from beginning to end, at real argument. This, indeed, is admitted by all his greatest Millenarian friends. I have not met with a single instance in which it has been pretended that Dr. Bonar has even attempted to grapple with any one of my positions. His article is, as I have before said, a continued sneer from beginning to end. From the references I have made no idea can be formed of the spirit in which it is written. I will content myself on this point with Dr. Bonar's concluding observations. He says:—"The book is without order; made up of repetitions; a prodigious parade of learned names—often misspelt; wordy in the extreme; with almost no Scripture in it; rash in assertion; imbecile in argument; yet written under the evident consciousness that it is the death-stroke of Millenarianism." I know that many who, like myself, have always regarded Dr. Bonar with

the very highest respect, will feel greatly pained and surprised when they read this termination of his article. Many will feel even now unwilling to believe that such vituperative—might I not add coarse—language could ever have proceeded from his pen, or been endorsed and adopted and brought before the public by him. But distressing as is the fact, there it stands before us. I will not venture to employ such words as would fitly characterise his language; that I leave to each individual reader to do according to his own individual views. All I will say is, Alas that such language could ever have proceeded from the pen that wrote “Hymns of Faith and Hope!” It is truly sad to think of it. Of this I am certain, that no one whose eye has scanned the lines I have quoted as constituting the conclusion of Dr. Bonar’s assault on my book will ever again read these “Hymns,” or any other poetic effusion from him, with the same feelings as before. The conclusion of Dr. Bonar’s attack on “The End of All Things” will hereafter incessantly haunt the minds of his former admirers,—among whom I class

myself. Will they be the only persons whose minds will be thus haunted? There can be but one answer to the question: that answer will be in the negative. There will be at least one more whose mind will be haunted by the article in question in the January number of the *Quarterly Journal of Prophecy*. That person will be Dr. Bonar himself.

So far I have spoken of the vituperation and the lamentable spirit which characterise the conclusion of Dr. Bonar's article, given as a sort of winding-up of his attack on my book. But, bad as this is, there is something worse than sneers, or the use of abusive language, or a bitter spirit: there is such a thing as a trampling on the truth. And this Dr. Bonar does in his desire to say something which it is supposed will inflict a wound on an opponent. May I put the question to Dr. Bonar—How readest thou the ninth commandment? Does not that command condemn the bearing of false witness against one's neighbour? I will not ask Dr. Bonar whether he speaks in accordance with the fact when he says "there is almost no Scripture" in my book, but I will

ask whether he himself believed this assertion when he made it? Or did he believe his similar assertion when he said, in another part of his article, that “the Bible is hardly quoted?” Dr. Bonar speaks of my “temerity” in reference to certain statements ascribed to me—which, however, I have never made—and from which he dissents; but, in this instance, a worse charge than “temerity” can be substantiated against him. I leave the reader to say what that charge is when I state what any one will be able to satisfy himself to be true by an examination of my book and Dr. Bonar’s own work, “Landmarks of Prophecy”—that, excluding the parts that are purely historical, and which consequently did not admit of scriptural references, there are actually *more* scriptural quotations in my work than in the volume from Mr. Bonar’s pen, whose title I have just given.

But the assertion that in my book there is “almost no Scripture” is not the only one in the above brief quotation which is at variance with the fact, and which Dr. Bonar must have known to be so. He says that my book is “written under the evident consciousness that

it is the death-stroke of Millenarianism." There is not, from beginning to end of my work, a single sentence which would give the semblance of a foundation for such an assertion; and, in the absence of any shadow of a ground for the injurious charge, we are compelled to come to the conclusion that, in penning the sentence, Dr. Bonar did, to use his own words, write "under the evident consciousness" that he was saying the thing that was not.

It were well if the injustice done to me were the only result of Dr. Bonar's article. That would, indeed, be a very secondary consideration. It is the scandal which such a mode of writing, by one occupying so high a place in the evangelical world, will bring on the cause of Christ, that is most to be deplored.

But are there no extenuating circumstances that can be urged in favour of Dr. Bonar? I know of none. Not one either of his personal or Millenarian friends has ventured in any private communication to me, nor, so far as I am aware, in any public journal, to urge a single excuse, however poor, for the way in which he has acted.

Probably I will here be asked, have I given Dr. Bonar any personal provocation in the book which he thus so vehemently assails? No such charge has been brought against my book. Dr. Bonar himself does not even make any such insinuation. So far, indeed, from saying anything unkind or disrespectful of him, I have spoken of him with the greatest respect, and in the spirit of true friendship. Referring to the statement made in his “Landmarks of Prophecy,” that he had at one time contemplated a history of Millenarianism, but that circumstances had prevented the execution of his purpose,—so early as in the second page of my book I expressed myself in the following terms:—“No one can regret this more than the writer of this volume; and in that regret all, I am sure, who are conversant with his works will share. No one could have executed such a task better than Dr. Bonar—few, perhaps none, so well.” Again, in speaking of Dr. Bonar in relation to the views of Mr. Robert Haldane on Millenarian matters I expressed myself as follows:—“Dr. Bonar is confessedly one of the best and most popular ad-

vocates of Millenarianism that the present century has produced." Again, in speaking of Millenarian poets, I make use of this expression :—"The two sweetest singers in the Millenarian Israel are Dr. Bonar and Sir Edward Denny." I have in another place spoken of him as "the most eminent of our modern Millenarians." In other parts of my first volume I have referred to him in the same strain, while in no one instance in the repeated references I have made to him has a single word proceeded from my pen which was not in accordance with the expressions I have quoted. On mere personal grounds, therefore, I might have expected that Dr. Bonar would have at least observed the usual courtesies of controversy, and especially when our controversy was exclusively religious.

I feel assured I have said enough to satisfy my readers that an attack on my work, written in such a spirit as this unfortunate ebullition of Dr. Bonar's Millenarian temper displays, is not only sure to damage Millenarianism, but to do very serious injury to the cause of that common evangelical religion which we all profess to have

equally at heart. But bad as this display of Dr. Bonar's uncharitable spirit is, there remains something much worse behind. Not content with drawing liberally on his vocabulary of vituperation, he, by one vigorous bound, overleaps all the courtesies and charities of life, and actually charges me with a *crime*. This is a grave accusation to bring against Dr. Bonar. "But can it," I imagine I hear some of his friends say, "be just." Such persons shall judge for themselves. "Whether," Dr. Bonar says, "a Christian man knowing so little about what he was affirming should have ventured to write a book full of such 'impressions' is a *serious question*. No Millenarian that we know would have been guilty of such a folly—nay, such a *crime*, for crime it must be in a Christian, whatever it may be in a man of the world." The italics are not mine; they are the property of Dr. Bonar. Language like that which he here uses ceases to involve mere considerations of courtesy. It resolves itself into a question of morality. Can it be possible that his conscience acquits him of a manifest and grievous violation of the first principles of

morality, in charging a fellow man with being guilty of a *crime* for no other reason than simply that he dissents from his statements? But I will not pursue the matter further. I leave it to Dr. Bonar's own reflections. If he can look back with satisfaction on the circumstance of having employed language of such gravity as that which I have quoted, I shall only say that I do not envy him the moral constitution of his mind; and in this feeling I doubt not even his best friends will share.

But Dr. Bonar charges me with something even worse than is comprehended in the word "crime," viewed in its vague signification. I am charged with something which may well appal the strongest mind. Will it be believed that Dr. Bonar goes so far as to represent me as undertaking "to refute the Lord himself?" His words are:—"In the following passage, under the idea that he is refuting the 'secret rapture,' he *undertakes to refute the Lord himself.*" Is there not something truly fearful in the fact that such language could be deliberately employed by a minister of the Gospel? To say that it is awfully irreverent

is to say nothing. I will not trust myself to apply to it the word which alone could adequately characterise it.

But it may be asked, Have I said nothing unkind or disrespectful of the Millenarian body, of whom Dr. Bonar is regarded as one of the chief champions, which could have justified him in employing language and displaying a bitterness of spirit which he would not otherwise have done? The answer to this question will be short and simple. I am not myself conscious of having felt, much less expressed, the slightest bitterness towards Millenarians, though so entirely opposed to their views. But more than this,—as one may not always be so good a judge of his own feelings or actions as others, I am happy in being able to add that in no one instance have I heard any Millenarian, either publicly or in private, charge me with having written a single sentence in an unkind spirit. On the contrary, the *unanimous* testimony of Millenarians has been that nothing could be better than the spirit in which the book is written. Even Dr. Bonar himself is no exception to this. The opening lines of

his article are as follows :—" We should gather from the following work that its author is a most amiable and warm-hearted Christian man. The spirit that breathes through his pages is excellent." How lamentable then, on account of that Scriptural truth which he and I are equally desirous of ascertaining, and having ascertained, to avow, that his review of my work should have been pervaded by the very opposite spirit to that for which he is pleased to give me credit.

But deeply to be deplored as this is, a circumstance remains to be adverted to which gives to it a yet more melancholy aspect. Will it be believed that in the same number of the *Quarterly Journal of Prophecy* in which this article, so full of all uncharitableness, and so sadly characterised by the absence of even a reverential spirit in dealing with so solemn a subject as the Second Coming of our Lord,—will it be believed that in this same number of Dr. Bonar's periodical there should be found the following earnest entreaty for the prayers of its readers, that it may be conducted "in faith and love," and not be carried away into

“*sharp unbrotherly* disputation?” Here is the “Notice”—which word is printed in capitals, while the thing itself is given in italics, in order that it may be made as emphatic as it is possible for the printer to make it. With the view, too, of giving it all the greater prominence, it constitutes the last thing in the last page of the number in which the attack on my first volume appears:—“*All readers of this Journal are most earnestly besought to give it room in their prayers; that by means of it God may be honoured and His truth advanced; also, that it may be conducted in faith and love, with sobriety of judgment and discernment of the truth, in nothing carried away into error, or hasty speech, or sharp unbrotherly disputation.*”

I could scarcely conceive of anything more truly distressing to a Christian mind, than that a man occupying the prominent place in the Church of Christ which Dr. Bonar does should thus earnestly beseech all the readers of the *Quarterly Journal of Prophecy* to pray that it may be conducted in the spirit of faith and love, and that in nothing it should be

carried away into *sharp unbrotherly* disputation, and yet write and publish such an article as that on which I have been animadverting. But apart from the sadness of the fact, it is strange that Dr. Bonar did not see what must be the effect on the minds of those whose prayers he thus so earnestly asks. They cannot fail to see the lamentable inconsistency of entreating their prayers that his journal may be conducted in *love* and without *sharp unbrotherly* disputation, when he himself writes in a spirit so utterly at variance with the prayers he thus asks at the hands of others. When he sat down to pen the article in question he could not, surely, have implored the Hearer and Answerer of prayer that He would be pleased to enable him to write in the spirit of faith and *love*, and that he should be prevented from being carried away into *sharp and unbrotherly disputation*. I feel a thorough persuasion that neither before commencing nor while writing the article did he thus address himself to the Throne of the heavenly grace. If he had done so, I feel assured that neither Millenarians nor Dr. Bonar's personal friends

would have had to deplore the unchristian and uncourteous spirit which pervades the article from beginning to end. Putting aside the Millenarian question altogether, such glaring violations, alike of the Christian spirit and of that courtesy which is practised even by the men of the world, do incalculable injury to the religion of Jesus, and therefore may well lay us all low in the dust before God. I shall only, in conclusion, express a humble but earnest hope that Dr. Bonar may be led to see and lament the spirit in which he wrote an article which is calculated to wound so deeply the cause of our common Christianity. It is distressing to every believer to see the religion of Jesus suffering anywhere, but it is doubly sad to see it suffering in the house of its friends.

CHAPTER II.

REPLY TO THE REV. ROBERT GOVETT'S
ANSWER TO THE FIRST VOLUME.

THE Rev. Robert Govett, of Norwich, grandson of the venerated William Romaine, is my next opponent, and one of great mark in the Millenarian world. He appeared contemporaneously in the January number of the *Rainbow* with Dr. Bonar in the *Quarterly Journal of Prophecy*, and continues his answer in the February and March numbers of that monthly organ of Millenarianism. The writing of this second volume is too far advanced to admit of my replying to what Mr. Govett says in opposition to my views on Millenarianism in the *Rainbow* for March. Part of the volume is, indeed, already in the printer's hands. I must

therefore limit my reply to what Mr. Govett says in the January and February numbers of the *Rainbow*; and even then I shall only be able from the plan of my work to advert to some of his more important points.

How different in spirit Mr. Govett's mode of dealing with my book and that of Dr. Bonar! What a contrast in the tone and temper of the two articles! Mr. Govett is as opposed to my views on the Millenarian question as Dr. Bonar; but he conducts the controversy in the spirit of a Christian and a gentleman. He can be pungent and even witty, but never allows himself to be betrayed into the employment of a single word which is incompatible with that charity and that courtesy which are among the main characteristics of real Christianity. Most earnestly do I wish that Dr. Bonar would place himself for a brief season under the tutorship of Mr. Govett, so far as relates to lessons in the Christian and courteous mode of conducting religious controversy. And if in such a contingency Dr. Bonar were to prove himself an apt pupil of Mr. Govett, the evangelical

world would be spared the pain of again witnessing from his pen so lamentable an exhibition of acerbity and discourtesy as that on which it has been my unpleasant duty to animadvert in the preceding chapter.

But it is not in relation to his Christian spirit only that I have to express my admiration of Mr. Govett. Not less due is it to him that I should express my high appreciation of the ability which his answer to my first volume displays. Millenarianism has few abler or more learned advocates than he. At the same time I cannot see that he has dislodged me from any one of the leading positions which I have taken up. I confidently maintain that my chief arguments retain whatever force they may have been deemed originally to possess.

Mr. Govett makes, to me, in the outset of his examination of my work, an important concession. "With," he says, "a great part of Mr. Grant's book I will not meddle. It is occupied in showing that some Millenarians have been too quick in citing authors as on their side of the question, when, indeed, they

either knew nothing of their views, or were opposed to them."

Mr. Govett then applies himself to the consideration of the mode in which the Scriptures are to be interpreted. He concurs in the opinion which I have so fully and repeatedly expressed, that some parts of the Word of God are to be literally construed, and parts figuratively. "The author of 'THE END OF ALL THINGS,' " Mr. Govett says, "admits readily that much of Scripture is to be literally accepted, and we in turn grant that some parts of Scripture are figurative."

So far Mr. Govett and I are agreed; but in acquiescing in the principle of a figurative interpretation of "some parts"—I should say many—of Scripture, Mr. Govett throws Mr. Molyneux, and those Millenarians who concur with him that *all* Scripture is to be interpreted literally, unceremoniously overboard.

Mr. Govett lays down the principle, in reference to the interpretation of Scripture, that "ordinary expression is to be grammatically interpreted," and he quotes the Judicious Hooker in support of his views. Hooker's

words on the point are:—"I hold it as an infallible rule of exposition of the Sacred Scriptures that when a literal construction will stand, the farthest from the letter is commonly the worst." Mr. Govett further quotes to the same effect the late eminent Biblical critic, Dr. Carson.

I entirely concur on this point with Mr. Govett, Hooker, and Dr. Carson; but the difficulty often lies in deciding in the case of particular parts of the Bible, whether they are to be taken literally or figuratively. That is just the point on which Mr. Govett and myself are at issue. The issue, indeed, of the Millenarian controversy is dependent on the fact as to whether particular passages of Scripture are to be understood in a literal or figurative sense. And here I may parenthetically observe, that while Mr. Govett quotes the words first of Hooker, and afterwards of Dr. Carson, regarding their views as to the right interpretation of Scripture, as if they sanctioned principles of construction which, if legitimately applied, ought to conduct to Millenarianism,—neither the "judicious" divine of two centuries ago,

nor the able Biblical scholar of the present century, had the slightest tinge of Millenarianism in their theological creeds.

Mr. Govett anticipates the question which will be asked by those who do not concur in his Millenarian views, relative to the standard by which we are to decide whether particular passages of Scripture are to be regarded as literal or figurative. The standard by which he would decide the question whenever it occurs is this :—Is the literal sense absurd or otherwise? A moment's reflection will show that this is no reliable test by which to decide the point. What may seem to one man the height of absurdity, will appear to another the very opposite quality. It will be regarded by the latter as the perfection of good sense. Mr. Govett himself anticipates this difficulty. He says—"But what if absurdity be alleged by one party to flow from the literal sense of a passage, and denied by the other? How are we to decide the question then?" That is the question. Mr. Govett attempts to answer it by saying that there are four forms of absurdity,—the physical, the metaphysical, the

mathematical, and moral. It would occupy too much of my space to follow Mr. Govett into his reasonings on each of these four forms of absurdity. It is the less to be regretted that I cannot do so, because it is unnecessary. It would answer no good end. It would leave the question just where it was before.

To prove this, it will only be requisite that I should advert for a moment to the first of the four forms of absurdity which he specifies—namely, the physical form of absurdity. Well now, Mr. Govett and I, however much we may differ on other points, are agreed on this,—that the Popish dogma of transubstantiation is a physical absurdity. It is a physical impossibility. It is contrary to three of our senses—the sense of sight, the sense of feeling, the sense of taste—that the bread should be part of the actual body of our Lord,—should, in other words, be human flesh. Mr. Govett and myself, therefore, at once reject the Popish doctrine of transubstantiation as an absurdity. But, then, as I mentioned in my first volume, our rejection of the Romanist dogma does not prevent others from receiving it and believing

in it as implicitly as in any other of the doctrines which constitute the Roman Catholic creed. No fewer than 150,000,000 persons—many of them judges of the land, peers, members of the House of Commons, distinguished men at the various bars in the civilised world, and theologians of great learning and talent—do at this hour firmly believe and rejoice in the Popish dogma of transubstantiation. What, then, comes of Mr. Govett's physical test whereby to ascertain whether a particular passage is to be understood in a literal or figurative sense? There is, in truth, no such absolute test. There may seem to Mr. Govett and myself to be such a test; but others will not accept it. Their only test will be in their own minds.

Mr. Govett, in laying down his proposition relative to physical absurdities, seeks to make himself more clearly understood by giving an illustration of what constitutes a physical absurdity. "It is," he says, "physically absurd to suppose that a man can lift a mountain." Mr. Govett is singularly unhappy in his choice of an illustration of his views as to what constitutes a physical absurdity. He evidently

forgot for the moment that we have the authority of our Lord himself—were our Lord's words to be taken literally—for maintaining, that there is nothing physically absurd in supposing that a man may lift a mountain. "Who-soever," said Jesus to his disciples on a memorable occasion, "shall say, 'Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.'"

Here is a distinct statement by our Lord himself that so far from the lifting of a mountain being—as Mr. Govett says it is—a physical absurdity, it is a thing which may be done. All, according to Christ, which is necessary to render it practicable, is the possession of faith, even in the smallest conceivable amount. Mr. Govett is, therefore, reduced to the necessity of either admitting that there is nothing "physically absurd" in the idea of lifting a mountain, or that Christ's words are to be construed, in a spiritual sense,—as merely meaning that faith will triumph over mighty moral difficulties. But if Mr. Govett feels

compelled to adopt the latter alternative, then the literal interpretation theory for which he so earnestly contends, falls at once to the ground.

Mr. Govett has thus placed himself between the horns of a dilemma by his unfortunate illustration of what constitutes a "physical absurdity." He says that "it is physically absurd to suppose that a man can lift a mountain." Our Lord not only supposes, but *says* the thing can be done. He even goes farther. He says that not only may it be lifted from the ground, but that it may be removed from its place. And all this by a simple word spoken in faith by a disciple of Christ. Will Mr. Govett seek to get out of the difficulty by doubting the word of our Lord? No: he would recoil at the thought. He will at once adopt the alternative, that Christ's language is to be here understood figuratively. I might deal in the same way with the three other kinds of absurdities which he enumerates, but to do so would occupy too much of my space.

Mr. Govett treads on delicate ground in laying down what he regards as an infallible criterion whereby to ascertain the true mean-

ing of Scripture. What would be to him an evident absurdity, if understood in a literal sense, would not be so to another. It were easy to adduce various instances in which our Lord's meaning was misconceived even by his disciples,—those who were constantly with him, and consequently might be expected to be least liable to misinterpret what he said. I will only allude to two such instances out of many. The first instance is that furnished in the conversation which took place between our Lord and Nicodemus. Had that conversation never occurred, and Mr. Govett, as a minister of the Gospel, had said to any unconverted man—“Ye must be born again,” Mr. Govett would maintain that the person he addressed could not understand the words in their literal signification, because it would be a “physical absurdity” to suppose that a man could “enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born again.” But Mr. Govett must admit, after reading the language of Nicodemus, that he would have committed a grievous mistake in assuming that no one could have understood our Lord's words in their literal sense; for

Nicodemus did so understand them. Mr. Govett's "physical absurdity" of a man entering "a second time into his mother's womb, and being born again," did not prevent Nicodemus from understanding Christ to have used the words, "Ye must be born again," in order to salvation, in their strictly literal sense.

Again, had Mr. Govett heard the Saviour say, "It were easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God," he would not have understood the words of Christ in their literal sense. He would have, in that instance, at least, abandoned his literal interpretation hypothesis. But the disciples, to whom the words were addressed, thought otherwise. They understood the language of their Lord in its strictly literal significance. And knowing that it was "physically" impossible that a camel could pass through the eye of a needle, they came to the conclusion that no rich man could be saved. Hence their question to Jesus, "Who then can be saved?" Every one knows the answer of our Lord—"With man," he said, "this is impossible; but with God all things are

possible." It was as if Christ had said, "No man can be saved by mere human power; but by Divine power any sinner can be saved." Here, then, we have a remarkable illustration of the entire failure of Mr. Govett's test for ascertaining whether a particular passage of Scripture is to be understood literally, or in a figurative or spiritual sense. And if in this, and various other cases, the personal disciples of Christ made such mistakes as to the meaning of their Lord when he spoke to them, can Mr. Govett feel surprised that others, in our day, should understand certain parts of Scripture in a literal sense, while he—regarding them as being, in the nature of things, "absurd"—would at once pronounce them to be capable of only a spiritual or figurative interpretation.

Under the head "absurdity" of some kind or other, Mr. Govett would, I suppose, class the very general notion among the students of prophecy, that the twelve hundred and sixty days, mentioned in the Revelation, mean, not days consisting of twenty-four hours, but twelve hundred and sixty years.

Mr. Govett rejects this notion as supremely absurd. He, with other eminent Millenarians, acting consistently with their favourite literal interpretation principle, contend that the "days" here spoken of mean days of twenty-four hours each, and nothing else. Mr. Govett asserts in the most confident terms, that so long as the decalogue lasts, which says that in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, he will adhere to his conviction that the word "day," when used in relation to the duration of time, means twenty-four hours; yet he knows that a large proportion—perhaps a majority—of his Millenarian friends make the twelve hundred and sixty days mentioned in the Apocalypse, to mean twelve hundred and sixty years. What, then, becomes of this one of Mr. Govett's four tests of absurdity? It utterly fails. What the year-day Millenarians regard as a fact, the literal day Millenarians—among them, Mr. Govett, Dr. Tregelles, Mr. B. W. Newton, and Mr. Molyneux—treat as a positive absurdity.

So far Mr. Govett's observations are of an introductory kind. But having cleared the

way, he proceeds to deal with the passages which I have quoted from Scripture with the view of proving the failure of the literal interpretation principle. He quotes a passage from my work, in which I advert to the passage in Jude, in which it is said that "the Lord will come"—Millenarians say to reign personally on earth for a thousand years—"with ten thousand of his saints." I then contend in the passage in question that a literal interpretation would limit the number of the saints, who shall come with the Lord when he descends from heaven to establish his personal or Millennial reign on earth, to ten thousand,—neither more or less; and that consequently Jude, thus interpreted literally, is at variance with those other inspired writers who say that he is to come with *all* his saints.

Mr. Govett's answer to this is as follows:—
 "Now, what have we to allege against this? We just ask our brother to look into his copy of Jude's Epistle once more. If our sight does not mislead us—and we have looked at the passage both with the naked eye and through glasses—it is 'with ten thousands.'

That little crooked letter, then, like a stone laid by some mischievous urchin beside the rail, throws his engine and train off the line. If he will take down his Greek Testament from the shelf, he will find the word plural there also."

As the article in which the paragraph appeared was published in the *Rainbow*, I naturally made my reply to it in that monthly organ of Millenarianism. My reply was, with one or two verbal alterations, as follows:—In referring to the passage in Jude which speaks of the Lord's coming again to our earth "with ten thousand of his saints," Mr. Govett represents me as altering—unintentionally of course—the sense of the quotation, by using the phrase "ten thousand of his saints," whereas, according to Mr. Govett, it ought to be "ten thousands of his saints." Mr. Govett says that he has looked at the passage both with and without his spectacles, and he finds what I quote "ten thousand," "ten thousands." Mr. Govett, fancying that he has got me here into what our friends across the Atlantic would call "a fix," says that "that little crooked letter,

like a stone laid by some mischievous urchin beside the rail, throws the author's engine and train off the line."

No, not quite so bad as that. If such a catastrophe were to occur, of course it would be all over with me, so far as my anti-Millennarianism is concerned. But, if Mr. Govett will look again, either with or without his spectacles, he will find as the result of the adoption himself of his advice to me, to look once more into my copy of Jude, that it is exactly as I give the passage. It is not "ten thousands," as Mr. Govett says it is, but "ten thousand," as I quoted it. In order that there may be no doubt on the point, I have cut out from my New Testament, and herewith send you "the Epistle of Jude." And I am sure that you will, in a foot-note to my letter, bear your testimony to the truth of my statement. Indeed, I think it would be well that you should transmit my copy of the Epistle of Jude to Mr. Govett, in order that on this point seeing may be believing with him. I could name several of our most eminent commentators who give the passage as "ten thousand"

and not as “ten thousands;” but it will suffice to refer to the commentaries of Dr. Adam Clarke and Dr. Kitto, two authors, as these are allowed on all hands to be, among the best of our Biblical scholars.

But even were there no copy of the Scriptures in which my reading of the passage in Jude, “ten thousand of his saints” occurred, but that Mr. Govett’s reading of it, “ten thousands of his saints,” was to be met with in *every* copy of the New Testament, it would not in the least degree improve his case. It is strange that it should not have occurred to one possessed of Mr. Govett’s unusual discernment, that “ten thousands” are just the same number—neither more or less—as “ten thousand.” If the expression “*tens* of thousands” had been made use of by the Apostle Jude, Mr. Govett would have a point in his favour to this extent, that there must have been at least twenty thousand of God’s saints—*tens* of thousands necessarily involving that number—who were to come with our Lord. But even had that phraseology—namely, *tens* of thousands of his saints—been employed by Jude,

it could still only have conveyed the idea of a *portion* of the saints coming with their Lord. Even, indeed, if instead of "thousands," it had been "millions on millions *of* his saints" of whom the apostle spoke, there would still have been a remnant left behind, and, consequently, this passage would have been at variance with those other passages on which Millenarians delight to dwell, where the Lord is spoken of as coming with "*all* his saints."

To this letter of mine in the *Rainbow* the Rev. Dr. Leask appends a note, bearing his testimony to the truth of my statement, but adding that the translation of the passage in our New Testament is manifestly defective. He says that in the original Greek the *literal* meaning of the phrase "ten thousand," or "ten thousands," means "holy myriads." I have elsewhere said that I accept the authorised version of the Scriptures, unless it can be proved beyond all controversy that such version is erroneous.

Mr. Govett adverts to that part of my first volume in which I allude to David as having prophetically said of Christ that his name

should endure *as* long as the sun, and where I point out that if the Psalmist's expression were to be taken literally, our Lord's name would terminate with the existence of the sun. In making this reference, I, by one of those slips of the pen to which all authors are liable, happened to say that there is a period appointed by God in which "there shall be no more sun." On the face of it, this was a mere slip of the pen; but Mr. Govett deals with it as if I had really and deliberately used the expression as one to be found in the Scriptures. This was hardly fair. But it is, after all, a matter of little moment. Though the very words are not to be found in the Bible, the fact which they are meant to convey is undoubted. The time will come when there shall be no more sun; for we are told that in heaven they need neither the light of the sun nor of the moon; and not needing the light of the sun in heaven, there will be no sun there, for God does nothing that is useless. The force of my argument is not impaired—not in the slightest degree—by the slip of the pen to which I have alluded. It is

still unanswerably the fact that the literal interpretation theory breaks down here. If the name of our Lord is to endure only as long as the sun, it is not destined to endure for *ever*.

Mr. Govett then quotes several passages from my chapter on the literal interpretation of Scripture, and in his effort to neutralise what I have said respecting the impossibility of their being rendered, with a regard to truth, in a literal sense, he seeks to explain away the natural import of those passages by assuming that our version of the Bible puts a wrong construction on them. He then presents his readers with his views of what the right rendering ought to be. If the principle of denying the accuracy of our authorised version of the Scriptures is to be admitted, there would be an end to all argument on theological questions, for there is hardly a part of either the Old or New Testaments, which has a direct bearing on doctrinal points, which would not be represented by some as an inaccurate translation. I have engaged in this controversy with Millenarians on the distinct understanding that they, equally with myself, were

willing to abide by the authorised English version of the Scriptures. Notwithstanding this, if I found that there is perfect unanimity among Biblical scholars in the conviction that some particular portion of the Bible was incorrectly rendered by the translators, I would make an exception in such a case. But I know of no case in which we are called to make any such concession. I may add that whenever we find an eminent Biblical critic, who arraigns the justice of our version of some particular portion of Divine Revelation, we are sure to find others, equally eminent for their Biblical learning, who will maintain that our version of such particular passage is the best that could be given. It is, therefore, as has been said in the preface to this volume, to be distinctly understood between the Millenarians and myself that we agree to accept the authorised version of our English Bible to be the final court of resort between us. By a distinct recognition of this principle on either side we greatly simplify the matters on which Millenarians and myself are at issue, while I get rid of the arguments which Mr. Govett urges

against parts of my book, grounded on the assumption that the passages of Scripture which I quote in support of my views are erroneously translated.

To reply fully to all that Mr. Govett has written in opposition to my views would require the greater part of a goodly volume. It is only to what I presume he himself regards as his strongest arguments that I profess to reply. Leaving, therefore, what he has written against "THE END OF ALL THINGS" in the January number of the *Rainbow*, I come now to the long and able chapter which he devotes to my work in the February number of the same periodical.

In resuming the consideration of my objections to Millenarianism in the February number of the *Rainbow*, Mr. Govett first of all applies himself to what I say in relation to the meaning of the word "day," as employed in the Mosaic account of the creation of the world. I remarked that it was not generally—I did not say universally—admitted by Christian divines, that each of the six days mentioned in the first chapter of Genesis must have

meant indefinite periods. Mr. Govett's answer to this is, "Not proven;" and I at once admit it as an excellent answer. I expressed no opinion of my own on the point. I simply referred to the fact that such was the prevalent opinion. I quite concur with Mr. Govett, without still expressing any decided opinion on the point, that it has not yet been proved that each of the six days mentioned in the first chapter of Genesis embraced a longer period than twenty-four hours. Mr. Govett emphatically adheres, as I have before said, to the literal interpretation of the word day. "So long," he says, "as the fourth command shall stand in the Decalogue, I deem it impossible that the six days of creation, with their 'evening' and 'morning,' can mean anything but literal periods of twenty-four hours."

Mr. Govett next adverts to what I have said in relation to the important passage in the fourteenth chapter of Zechariah. My position in reference to this passage was, as will be remembered, that as the Millenarians put a literal construction on that part of the third verse of that chapter, wherein it is said, after

mentioning the Lord's descent from heaven on Mount Olivet, that he will fight for his people Israel, who are at the moment sorely besieged in Jerusalem by the infidel army, consisting of all nations,—they are bound in consistency to interpret literally the previous part of the sentence, in which it is stated that “he will *fight for them as when he fought in the day of battle.*” The question which I called on Millenarians to answer was this:—“As you maintain that our Lord is to come down from heaven personally, and plant his feet on Mount Olivet, and then fight personally in Jerusalem for his beleagured saints, and as Christ is on this occasion to fight for his people ‘as when he fought in the day of battle,’ can you point out to me one solitary instance in which the Lord fought personally for his people in any period of their history?” This was my challenge to the Millenarians. No Millenarian, with the exception of Mr. Govett himself, has undertaken to accept it. How then does Mr. Govett meet my challenge? He cites a number of cases which he represents as being personal interpositions on the part of

God for his people when they were in imminent danger, but which, without a single exception, can be proved to have been purely providential interpositions. He refers to the verse in Exodus in which it said that the Lord went before his people "by day in a pillar of a cloud to lead them." What but the inexorable exigencies of a cherished theory could make this to mean a *personal* appearance of God to his people? Who but one so hard driven as Millenarians are in this case, would ever make a pillar of a cloud synonymous with a personal manifestation of the Lord?

The pillar of cloud was a mere unsubstantial appearance floating in the air without intelligence or life, or any one of the qualities which constitute personality; whereas the advent of our Lord on the Mount of Olives, to which Mr. Govett represents the pillar of cloud as being perfectly parallel, is to be personal, in the most comprehensive and literal acceptation of the term. Christ is to descend on that Mount in the same human body as that in which he ascended to heaven when he had completed the work on earth which his Father had given

him to do. And as he is to descend personally in so manifest a manner as that he will be seen and felt, and his footsteps heard as he treads the earth, so he is to fight personally, just like any other commanding officer, against the infidel hosts that have come up from all parts of the earth against the saints in Jerusalem. There is such an obvious dissimilarity between the two cases that I must fain believe that Mr. Govett himself will, on more mature consideration, confess that he has in this instance completely failed in his argument.

Passing over several other allusions of Mr. Govett to what he regards as personal interpositions on the part of God on behalf of his people,—each of which is demonstrably nothing more than a providential interposition on their behalf,—Mr. Govett adverts to what he evidently regards as one of his strongest illustrative points. It is but fair that he should be allowed in such a case to speak for himself. “Then,” he says, “comes the command to Moses to lift up his rod, and the waves rush down on the host, and overwhelm them. This was a personal interference of the Lord against

the enemies of his people. And what said Moses of it, when comforting the troubled multitude? ‘*The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.*’”

“Here there is one case of the Lord’s fighting for Israel in person.” Nothing of the kind. It is simply a providential interposition on the part of God on behalf of his people. If God had on this occasion fought personally for Israel, he must have been visibly among them, just in the same sense in which they were visible to one another. Anything more manifestly at variance with the fact of God’s *personally* fighting for his people on this occasion, could not be conceived. In fact, there was no fighting at all, in the literal meaning of the word, on the occasion. The word “fighting” implies a battle where there are killed and wounded on either side. Here there were neither killed nor wounded. There was no conflict, no clash of arms at all between the hosts of Pharaoh and the children of Israel. God simply opened a way by an exercise of his Almighty power and Divine goodness whereby his people could pass safely through the Red

Sea ; and then by another exercise of the same omnipotence caused the waters to overwhelm and drown the Egyptians when they were in pursuit of the Israelites. On this account, therefore, as well as on the other accounts to which I have adverted, it were a complete misconception of the meaning of language to represent this interposition of the Lord on the part of his chosen people, as fighting personally for them in the same sense and manner as Christ is to fight for his besieged saints in Jerusalem when he, according to Millenarians, descends on Mount Olivet to establish his Millennial reign on the earth.

It is not necessary to advert to the other illustrative cases brought forward by Mr. Govett in his endeavours to establish his hypothesis, that God has on various occasions fought *personally* for his people. They all, from their very nature, equally fail. But, indeed, it is not necessary to enter into any elaborate argument to prove the utter groundlessness of Mr. Govett's allegations on this point. There is one single text of Scripture which is completely, and for ever, decisive of the point. "No

man," saith John, "hath seen God at any time." And, therefore, though there were appearances in the air betokening not only the existence, but the sovereignty of God, and his providential solicitude on behalf of his people, there never could have been that *personal* presence of Jehovah which Millenarians so energetically affirm will characterise the descent of Christ on Mount Olivet and his fighting for the besieged saints when overpowered by the "all nations of the earth," who are on that occasion to be arrayed in battle against them.

But, in fact, there could be no *personal* presence of God on any occasion, inasmuch as he has no visible form wherein to manifest himself. God is a spirit, and, therefore, could not, in the nature of things, ever have fought on the day of battle in the same way as Millenarians tell us Christ is to fight for the saints in Jerusalem when he descends in his human body on Mount Olivet for the purpose of establishing his Millennial kingdom on earth.

But, in truth, God could not, in strict propriety of speech, be said to have *fought* at all for his people on this occasion, as no actual

battle took place between the Egyptians and the Israelites. The children made their exodus from Egypt, and passed safely through the Red Sea without the loss of a single one of their number, and all the hosts of Pharaoh were drowned, but the Israelites had no hand in bringing about the terrible doom of the Egyptians. They were all destroyed by God's special providence, without any human instrumentality whatever being employed. It is truly surprising that a man of Mr. Govett's quick discernment should not have at once seen the singularly inappropriateness of citing the event in question as an illustration of God's *fighting personally* for his people.

I am glad that Mr. Govett has boldly grappled with this part of my argument against Millenarianism, because if he has so signally failed to dislodge me from my entrenchment here, no other Millenarian will succeed in the attempt.

In quoting what I have said on the passage in the twenty-second verse of the tenth chapter of the Hebrews, Mr. Govett evidently misunderstands my meaning. I said that I had

heard a popular metropolian preacher interpret the words, "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and *our bodies washed with pure water*," as literally meaning that it is the duty of believers to have clean bodies, and clean houses also, as things indispensable to the acceptable worship of God. Mr. Govett says that the passage in question and two others named in conjunction with it "speak of the literal water of baptism." "These words," says he, "treat of baptism. And so," he adds, "say authorities, both Pædo-Baptist and Baptist: Calvin, Alford, M. Henry's Continutor, Bleek, Bengel, and other German expositors noticed by Rosenmuller; Moses Stuart, Doddridge, Barnes, Dr. Burton, Dr. Bloomfield, Maclean, Paræus, Scott; and Owen and Beza, with qualifications."

I have no disposition to dispute this point with Mr. Govett, nor, indeed, with any other Millenarian; but I am sure Mr. Govett will admit that bodily washing in all such cases, through the use of pure water, is emblematical of spiritual washing, or the purification of the

soul. My sole object in alluding to the passage in question was to extort an admission from Mr. Govett that the popular preacher whom I heard say that he understood the words "our bodies washed with pure water," to mean personal cleanliness, as implied in the practice of keeping our houses clean, and washing our bodies, in the strictly literal sense of the words, with pure water, when we draw near to God in the discharge of our devotional duties,—was wrong. I am sure that Mr. Govett himself would not put any such construction on the words. He is not prepared to carry his literal interpretation principle to such an extent as did the preacher to whom I refer.

Mr. Govett replies to my remarks, in opposition to the literal interpretation principle, as applied to our Lord's answer to Peter's question, "How often shall I forgive?" that the number of forgivenesses should be "seventy times seven,"—by saying that this was putting a definite number for an indefinite one. Mr. Govett, then, practically gives up in this instance the literal interpretation principle. And if given up here, on what ground does he and other

Millenarians adhere literally to the passage in the Revelation on which alone they ground their faith in the personal reign of Christ on earth with his saints for a thousand years? Why not in that case also concede to us anti-Millenarians that “the thousand years” is a definite number for an indefinite one? But Millenarians will not make this admission to us, though, reasoning from analogy, they are bound to do so, because they are conscious that such a concession would prove subversive of the whole Millennium system.

Mr. Govett then proceeds to contend that the prophecies concerning our Lord’s first advent and thirty-three years’ residence in our world were literally fulfilled, and thence maintains that every other passage of Scripture ought also to be literally construed,—always with the reserve, that a literal interpretation does not involve a manifest absurdity. Mr. Govett here does a great injustice to those who, like myself, cannot see Millenarianism to be Scriptural. He proceeds on the assumption, in effect, if not professedly, that we deny the literal interpretation of all prophetic Scripture.

I have often wondered how Millenarians, in the face of such conclusive evidence to the contrary, could bring themselves to do us so much injustice. We believe as firmly as the most ultra-Millenarians do in the literal meaning of a great portion of Old Testament Scripture; but we cannot admit that our doing so deprives us of the right to put a figurative or spiritual interpretation on other portions of the Old or New Testament which we believe in our conscience, after the most careful consideration, to admit only of a figurative construction.

Mr. Govett is, in some parts of his answer to my book, candid in his admissions. He makes one important concession to me. He represents me as showing the inconsistencies of those Millenarians who contend for the literal thousand years of our Lord's personal reign, while they make the twelve hundred and sixty days spoken of in the same book of Revelation as each denoting a year, by putting the question, "By what right do you [Millenarians] take the thousand years literally, and twelve hundred and sixty days

to signify years?" I felt myself that I had here placed the year-day Millenarians in a dilemma, from which it would be impossible for them to extricate themselves. But it is important to have the testimony of so decided and able a Millenarian as Mr. Govett to the fact of my having done so. What he says is this:—"A very good question to those who hold the year-day theory"—which Mr. Govett does not; and, therefore, in relation to this phase of the Millenarian question, he is quite consistent. He adds, addressing his brother year-day Millenarians, "Be consistent; one or other of your expositions must give way before this crushing bullet," namely, the fact of my pointing out that those Millenarians who so far depart from the literal principle as to construe the twelve hundred and sixty days into twelve hundred and sixty years, have no right to put a literal construction on the "thousand years" as the definite period of Christ's Millennial reign on earth.

I have thus adverted to what I regard as the leading points in Mr. Govett's answer to my first volume, so far as his answer had

proceeded when I was called on to go to press with this part of my second volume. There are some other points in Mr. Govett's answer in the *Rainbow* for February, to which I would like to have replied, but I regret all the less the impossibility of doing it, because in the chapter which I shall have to devote to a consideration of "The Difficulties Incident to Millenarianism," I shall have an opportunity of dealing with those points.

CHAPTER III.

THE PROPHECY INVESTIGATION SOCIETY AND
THE FIRST VOLUME.

AMONG the various communications from eminent Millenarians which I have received in relation to my first volume, there is one which on every account is entitled to the most respectful attention. It is from the pen of the Rev. W. R. Fremantle, Rector of Claydon, Buckinghamshire. Anything coming from Mr. Fremantle, even were it written in his purely private capacity, would command immediate attention from any one acquainted with that gentleman. But in this instance what he says is clothed with greater interest because he speaks officially as President of the "Prophecy Investigation Society." "You have," he says, "referred to the Prophecy

Investigation Society, and have announced your intention of recurring to it in another part of your work. You will, I hope, allow me to point out a very serious error into which you have been led with respect to the constitution and principles of that society, in the hope that you will correct it in your forthcoming volume. You state that Millenarians are most zealous, active, and unwearied in the propagation of their principles, and that the Prophecy Investigation Society has for many years been *in active operation with that view*. This is at variance with the fact. The society was established in 1842 with the sole object of investigating prophecy. It has never departed from its fundamental principle. It has never, at any of its conferences, come to a decision upon any point, or published its conclusions as to the interpretation of any passage of Scripture."

My answer to this will be very simple and very brief. I hope it will also be satisfactory. I never said nor even meant to convey the impression, that a report of the discussions of the Prophecy Investigation Society was published by

the authority of the society ; or, indeed, that any report ever was published at all. At the same time, it would not be easy to conceive why fifty Christian gentlemen, more than forty of them clergymen of the Church of England, should hold a session of three successive days twice a year for the purpose of discussing topics, all of them bearing more or less closely on the one important question of the Millennium, and yet not feel a greater or less degree of anxiety that the conclusions come to should be brought before the religious public. On the very face of the matter it would be highly blameable to adopt certain views as the result of long and careful and prayerful consideration, without wishing to diffuse the light among others which they themselves believe to have been shed abroad in their own minds by the illuminating agency of the Holy Spirit. I hold it to be a duty no less binding as regards teaching through the medium of the pulpit, the press, or conversation, than it is as regards our walk and conversation, that we should let our light abundantly shine before our fellow-men. To hide one's light under a bushel, no matter

to what part of Divine truth that light has a special relation, appears to me to be culpable in no common degree. In respect to what believers in Jesus regard as revealed truth, without reference to special aspects of that truth, I hold that they are bound to act in accordance with the words of our Lord when he compared his disciples to a city set on a hill which cannot be hid.

According to Mr. Fremantle, the members of the Prophecy Investigation Society abstain from the publication of its proceedings or conclusions. As I have already remarked, I never said otherwise. I admit the validity of the reason why the society does not, as that reason is given by its president. But before adverting to the reason alluded to, let me, in order that I may not in any way misrepresent his views, quote his identical words. "The Society," he says, "has never, at any of its conferences, come to a decision upon any point, or published its conclusions as to the interpretation of any passage of Scripture. Individual members have upon their own responsibility printed essays and addresses delivered from time and time at

the meetings of the society, and lectures have been delivered during Lent in St. George's, Bloomsbury, and Trinity Church, St. Marylebone, by twelve clergymen of the Church of England, but the society, as such, has never sanctioned a single sentence uttered by any one of its members, either in public or in private."

I was quite aware from the first that the Prophecy Investigation Society never did in any formal manner, as a *society*, either publish itself, or give its sanction to the publication by others, of "its conclusions as to the interpretation of any passage of Scripture." That was, indeed, a thing which the society could not do. It would have been impossible, for this reason,—that on no one passage of prophetic Scripture has the same interpretation been unanimously given by the members. I speak from the testimony of more than one of their number when I say that the differences of opinion among the members of the society as to the construction to be put upon particular passages, have been so great and manifold as, in some cases, to leave a feeling of perfect bewil-

derment in the minds of most of those present at the close of the discussions. I could refer to a particular case in which, some years ago, a very animated and able discussion took place between a representative of the Praeterist school of prophecy, and a representative of the Futurist school of prophecy; and the result was that so abundant was the Scripture testimony, and so able the arguments adduced in favour of either hypothesis, that one distinguished clergyman confessed himself to be utterly "bewildered," and said that the effect on his mind was, that he would not hereafter feel confident in the soundness of any particular view of disputed passages of prophetic Scripture, but would wait with patience for the light to be thrown on those passages by their actual fulfilment.

When, therefore, there exists so much diversity of opinion with regard to particular passages of the prophetic Scriptures, among the members of the society, it is manifest in the nature of things, that it could not officially publish its conclusions. But Mr. Fremantle virtually concedes that I am, notwithstanding,

practically right when I say that the society zealously advocates Millenarianism. He makes this concession, in effect, when he says that “individual members of the society have upon their own responsibility printed essays and addresses, delivered from time to time at *the meetings of the society*.” Here it is confessed that each member in his own sphere of influence, and by his own mode of publication, does disseminate the views which he advocated at the society’s meetings; and it is to be remembered that though there is among the members the distracting differences on particular points to which I have alluded, yet all the addresses so spoken and so published have for their sole object the dissemination of Millenarian principles. Practically, therefore, I repeat I was right in representing the Prophecy Investigation Society as zealous labourers in the Millenarian vineyard, though I ought to have made the distinction between the acts of the society in its corporate character, and those of its members in their individual capacities.

And yet there is a sense in which the society may be said to have acted in its corporate cha-

racter in the promulgation of its Millenarian views. Its president admits that in previous years "Millenarian lectures have been delivered during Lent in St. George's Church, Bloomsbury, and Trinity Church, St. Marylebone, by twelve clergymen of the Church of England." As no fewer than seven or eight volumes—I do not remember which—of these Millenarian lectures have been published, each of the preachers being avowedly a member of the society, I do not see how any one can dispute the accuracy of the statement made by me, that the volumes published have appeared under the moral sanction at least, if not of the official sanction of the society. To this fact at any rate I can speak,—that justly, or otherwise, the seven or eight volumes to which I have alluded have been regarded by the religious public as coming out under the virtual sanction of the Prophecy Investigation Society. They have been so received and so read. On their appearance they were so by myself. I looked upon them as, in effect, though not avowedly, the society's publications.

I now come to a part of Mr. Fremantle's

letter to me, which I own does surprise me. I took it for granted that *all* Millenarians would be gratified to receive an admission from one so opposed to their views as I am, to the effect that, however great their differences on other points, they are almost all agreed as to the fact, and its importance, that Christ is to come and reign personally on earth with his saints for a thousand years. But it would appear that I have given Millenarians credit to which they had no title, and which, indeed, they did not claim. After saying that it is not correct, as stated by me, that while the Investigation Society discuss prophetic subjects generally, they make all other subjects subordinate to that of the personal reign of Christ on earth for a thousand years, the President of the Prophecy Investigation Society proceeds to say :—"To map out the reign of Christ on earth for a thousand years is a subject upon which students of prophecy feel the greatest possible difficulty. You are perhaps not aware that some of the holiest and most honoured members of the society have held very different views upon this point, such as

the late Rev. J. Haldane Stewart, the late Duke of Manchester, &c. And at the present moment I question whether you would find any ten students of prophecy themselves of one mind as to the exact interpretation of the twentieth chapter of the Revelation. If you had said the members of the Prophecy Investigation Society are agreed in expecting the personal pre-Millennial advent of our Lord, you would have stated what is substantially correct, but that is a very different affair."

I must own that I am more surprised than I can express at this part of Mr. Fremantle's communication. He certainly here makes an admission which I should not have expected. If I had said, as Mr. Fremantle here admits, that the thousand years' personal reign of Christ on earth "is a subject upon which students of prophecy feel the greatest possible difficulty," I should have been afraid that Millenarians would, almost to a man, have charged me with doing them a grievous injustice by misrepresenting their views. After all I have read of Millenarian literature, and all the intimate intercourse which I have had

with intelligent Millenarians, I am, I must repeat, startled at the announcement made by the President of the Prophecy Investigation Society in thus repudiating the idea that the Millenarians, as a body, are agreed as to the fact of the personal reign of Christ on earth for a period of a thousand years, and expressing a doubt whether at the present moment any ten students of prophecy could be found who are thoroughly of one mind as to the exact interpretation of the twentieth chapter of Revelation. Mr. Fremantle, without seeming to be conscious of it, here makes out my case. He even goes much further than I was disposed to do in relation to the great and manifold differences which subsist among Millenarians in relation to the more prominent parts of their scheme. Not ten of them agreed regarding Christ's personal reign on earth for a thousand years, but only that there will be a pre-Millennial personal coming of the Lord! I really did think that on other prominent points there was something approaching unanimity. No, says the President of the Prophecy Investigation Society,—

no, the only point on which Millenarians are agreed in relation to the personal advent of Christ is, that it is to be pre-Millennial.

What, then, comes of the literal interpretation of Scripture, for which Millenarians, as a body, are such strenuous sticklers, if this be really so? The twentieth chapter of Revelation is, as I have stated in my first volume, the great pillar and ground work of the Millenarian system. It is the chapter to which, above all other portions of Scripture, Millenarians triumphantly point as proving the soundness of their scheme. Yet now we find, on the deliberate and explicit testimony of one of the greatest and best Millenarians of our time—one, moreover, filling the high and honourable position of President of the Prophecy Investigation Society—that it is questionable whether “any ten students of prophecy are to be found who are thoroughly of one mind as to the exact interpretation of the twentieth chapter of the Apocalypse.”

Surely, when Mr. Fremantle made this admission, he did not perceive the full importance of it. It not only lays the axe at the root of

the theory of the personal reign of Christ on earth with his saints for a thousand years, but it is no less subversive of that cardinal doctrine of Millenarianism, the first resurrection, in connection with the reign of Christ and his saints on earth. The chapter in question is the only one in either of the Testaments in which even Millenarians themselves pretend that the doctrine of a first resurrection of believers a thousand years previous to the resurrection of the wicked, is to take place, and, accordingly, if but ten students of prophecy are to be found who agree as to the interpretation which ought to be given to this chapter, it follows that, so far as it is concerned, Millenarianism has no basis at all on which to rest,—not even a sandy or insecure foundation.

Surely it is unreasonable on the part of Mr. Fremantle, or any other Millenarian, to concede that not ten students of prophecy are to be found who agree as to what constitutes the right interpretation of the chapter in question, speaking of it as a chapter, and then proceed to quote such portions of it as accord with their views, as confidently if there could be

no diversity of sentiment with regard to the construction which ought to be put on them.

Mr. Fremantle proceeds to say :—" In your elaborate chapters upon the ' Literal Interpretation of Scripture,' you select examples and personalities which you employ somewhat ingeniously to connect with Millenarians generally, and thus include the members of the Prophecy Investigation Society. Now I venture to affirm that there is not a member of it at the present moment who, if called upon to reply to your book, would not produce from the writings of those who hold your views the most glaring examples of inconsistency of interpretation."

First of all let me here remark, in justice to Mr. Fremantle, as well as to myself, that in using the word " personalities," in this part of his communication, he does not, I am sure, employ it in the unpleasant sense in which the term is usually employed. Mr. Fremantle will, I feel certain, be ready to admit that there is not a single approach to " personalities" in my work. And on this point it is equally due to Millenarians and myself to say,

that in no one instance, either in reviews of my volume, or in my private intercourse with Millenarians since its publication, has any insinuation been made, much less specific charge preferred, to the effect that I have in any one case written at variance with the Christian spirit, or with that courtesy which ought always to be observed in controversy, even from purely social considerations. Mr. Fremantle simply means, when making use of the word in question, that I have given the names as well as the language of Millenarian authors in my allusions to, or quotations from, what appears in Millenarian books on the subject of the literal interpretation of Scripture.

My answer to what the President of the Prophecy Investigation Society says in the extract from his communication which I have just given, will be brief. I am not, nor is any other anti-Millenarian, responsible for the particular interpretations of certain passages of Scripture which persons who are opposed to Millenarianism may have given, or may give. I cannot see how they affect my arguments, urged with a view to show the impossibility of

the literal interpretation of Scripture principle being capable of a universal application. Mr. Fremantle, indeed, gives up, in what follows, the literal interpretation principle, so far as regards the universal application of that principle. "Your book," says the President of the Prophecy Investigation Society, "is before the world, and must be judged by its own merits. My only anxiety is, that you should not mislead your readers into the supposition that the society is pledged to the systems of Mr. Molyneux, Mr. Wills Newton, or Mr. Isaac Labagh, or any individual, or number of individuals, whom you call Millenarians, and whom you may detect in holding an exaggerated view of the literal interpretation."

In these last words we have an important concession. The President of the Prophecy Investigation Society admits that I have detected Millenarians—three of whom, all distinguished men, he names—who do hold an exaggerated view of the literal interpretation principle. My case is thus made out by the admissions of one of the ablest and most prominent men among the Millenarian

body. What Mr. Capel Molyneux, who is a member of the Society, will say to this, remains to be seen. A more emphatic repudiation of his hypothesis, that *all* Scripture is to be interpreted literally could not be imagined.

I so much admire the spirit which pervades the conclusion of Mr. Fremantle's communication, that though it does not bear directly, in an argumentative sense, on any of the points at issue between Millenarians and those who share my anti-Millenarian notions, I cannot forbear quoting the passage. It is, besides, an act of justice that I should do so. "I will only in conclusion," says Mr. Fremantle, "ask you to reconsider your statements, and to repair the injustice you have done to a large body of Christian men, who for nearly a quarter of a century have, in the dearest bonds of brotherly love, in the spirit of earnest prayer and humble dependence upon the promised aid of the Holy Ghost to show them things to come, and guide them into all truth, searched the Scriptures together and taken heed to the sure word of prophecy, as unto a light that shineth in dark places. How far they have succeeded

in the development of prophetic truth we have no positive means of knowing ; but they have at least made this discovery—that the opinions of the Fathers of the first four centuries are more intelligible than those of the divines of the Middle Ages, and that whatever may have been the views of the Reformers and of their successors, down to the time of Mede and Newton, the commentaries upon that large portion of the Bible which contains prophecy were most meagre and unsatisfactory. Whole books and chapters, with the exception of a text here and there, were untouched, because the principle of spiritualising after the fashion of Origen would not and never will admit of harmonious application. It is comparatively an easy task to select an instance of an extravagant exposition of prophecy, and condemn the author as a Millenarian, but it is another thing to supply an orthodox, critical, and consistent exposition of such passages as verses nineteen to twenty-six in the third chapter of the Acts, the whole of the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and chapters nineteen, twenty, and twenty-one of the Revelation.

“If you should desire to satisfy yourself further as to the operation of the society, I feel sure the committee would have great pleasure in sending you an invitation to be present at their next discussion, in April, 1866, when you would be able to judge for yourself as to the spirit and ability with which this great and important branch of theology is handled.”

There is nothing in the above to which I deem a reply necessary. I have written to Mr. Fremantle, thanking him for his kind invitation to be present at the next discussion of the Prophecy Investigation Society. He closes his communication with the following words: “Praying that the Spirit of truth may sanctify all our discussions, I am,” &c. In this prayer I sincerely join. If it were more earnestly and more frequently offered up by such of us as feel occasionally called on to engage in religious controversy, I am sure that there would not only be less of acrimony in our discussions, but that we would make far greater approximations than we do, to accordance in our views of Divine truth.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST—HIS OWN
WORDS ON THE SUBJECT.

IN now approaching the consideration of the important question as to whether or not the Lord Jesus will descend from heaven to reign *personally* on earth during the period of Millennial glory which the Church of Christ is destined to enjoy, it is my earnest desire, as it has been my fervent prayer, that we should seek to divest our minds of all prejudices on the subject. It is my wish and hope that author and reader may pursue their inquiries with that solemnity of soul and kindness of feeling towards those who differ from them, which ought to characterise the investigations of Scriptural topics on the part of believers in Jesus. Grieved, indeed, as I have before said, should I be if, because I cannot see the question

of the Millennium in the same light as others, I should say a single unkind word regarding those who may differ from me, or experience towards them even for one moment a single uncharitable feeling. They, no less than myself, are earnest seekers after the truth as it is in Jesus on this as on all other questions, and are just as prepared to act in accordance with their convictions, whatever these may be, as I trust I am myself. I feel in the outset that I am bound to say thus much to "brethren dearly beloved *in* the Lord," and brethren "dearly beloved *of* the Lord," with whom I differ on the subject of the Millennium.

There is one other preliminary observation which I wish to make, because I regard it as of great importance. It is that, in differing from the views of those who believe that Christ will come and reign personally on earth for a thousand years, I am just as fully convinced as they are that the Church of Christ is destined to have a glorious future in this world for a certain period. Whether that period of the Church's glorious history is literally to last a thousand years, I do not know. As definite

periods are in Scripture often put for periods of indefinite duration, and as days are put for years, and even for many centuries, and as with the Lord a thousand years are said to be as one day, and one day as a thousand years, my own view always has been that the expression “a thousand years” does not of necessity mean *literally* a thousand years, but may mean some prolonged indefinite time. Long after I had formed this opinion I was gratified to find that the late Dr. Whately, Archbishop of Dublin, entertained the same conviction. So, too, do even some Millenarians, as I shall show hereafter. But I do not attach importance to this particular point. I am willing to assume that the expression “a thousand years,” in relation to the personal reign of Christ on earth, is to be taken literally, and will accordingly, in any future references I may make to it, acquiesce in its being so understood.

The difference between Millenarians and those who, like myself, cannot concur in their interpretation of those Scriptures which relate to the Second Advent of Christ, is simply this—that they apply to the coming of our Lord

to reign, as they affirm, personally on earth, all, or nearly all, those portions of the Word of God which we contend can only be legitimately applied to the great fact of our Lord's coming to our earth to judge the world, and to put an end to all sublunary things. That our Lord will come again to our world, and come in the glory of his Father, attended by an innumerable retinue of saints and of holy angels, we believe as fully as the Millenarians themselves do. And, indeed, this is the firm belief of all evangelical denominations of Christians. With the exception of the followers of Baron Swedenborg, I know of nobody of modern religionists professing faith in Christ who do not heartily say "Amen" to that part of the Church of England service in which it is said, "From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead," or that other part in which that section of the universal Church of Christ addresses Jesus in these words: "We believe that thou shalt come to be our Judge. We pray thee, therefore, help thy servants, whom thou hast redeemed by thy precious blood."

Let us then proceed, with all the solicitude to know the truth, and all the solemnity which our minds are capable of feeling, accompanied with prayer for the necessary guidance of the Holy Spirit, in our researches to inquire what saith the Scriptures on the subject of Christ's Second Coming to our earth.

In directing our attention to the Second Coming of Christ, I will, with one exception, confine my observations to those passages in the New Testament to which Millenarians point us as proving the soundness of their faith in our Lord's coming to reign personally on earth. To various passages in the Old Testament, as bearing on the subject, I shall have occasion to make passing allusions, when examining passages in the New Testament to which they are more or less parallel. I cannot better state my reasons for adopting this course than in quoting the language of the Rev. T. R. Birks, an author whose works on various theological subjects are widely known, while he is at once one of the ablest and most zealous Millenarians of the present day. In the first chapters of his "Outlines of Unfulfilled

Prophecy," in which he endeavours to prove that Christ will come [and reign visibly on earth, he says :—"The prophecies of the Old Testament, when both advents alike were future, are clearly less adapted to constitute the evidence of the great doctrine now to be examined. We must resort to the direct testimony of our Lord and his Apostles, and learn from the life of the Man of Sorrows, or of those who speak to mankind with his authority, the certainty of his return to that world from which he has gone away; and that the heavens, which have concealed him from us for a time, will not retain him for ever."

The exception which I make in this part of my work as to what the Old Testament says, or is alleged by Millenarians to say, regarding the Second Coming of Christ, is the passage in the fourteenth chapter of the book of Zechariah, beginning with the first and ending with the fifth verse. I make the exception in relation to the passage, because *all* Millenarian writers attach a very special importance to it. They regard it, indeed, as so conclusive in favour of their faith in the Second Coming of Christ to

reign personally in our world, that they would feel justified in embracing that doctrine were it not supported by any other portion of Scripture.

Let us, then, carefully examine the passage in question. "Behold," says the Prophet Zechariah, "behold the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of

the mountains shall reach unto Azal : yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah : and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.”

It is first of all here assumed by Millenarians that the expression “the day of the Lord” means his coming again in person to our earth. I do not know of any Millenarian of note—indeed, of any Millenarian at all, with the single exception of Dr. Bonar—who does not most confidently affirm that the phrase refers to our Lord’s personal coming in the Millennium sense of the words. Dr. Bonar admits that it *may* mean something else. What he says is :—“I do not say that this term itself can determine the time here spoken of to be that of the Advent. It is on what follows that I lean for fixing this.” Some of our most eminent commentators think that it was to the destruction of Jerusalem that the prophet referred when he used the expression, “Behold the day of the Lord cometh.” I admit the difficulty of fixing a precise meaning to the words ; but I maintain that it

cannot allude to the personal coming of Christ to the earth in the Millenarian sense of the phrase. That assumption is wholly unsupported by evidence.

It is of importance that particular attention should be paid to the reading of the sentence. It will be observed that it is not said that the Lord himself will personally come on any particular day, or at any particular time. The words are, "Behold, the *day* of the Lord cometh." I cannot see that the phrase necessarily involves any personal advent at all. Periods of great trouble or importance are frequently spoken of in the Scriptures in similar language; just as we read of the "day of vengeance of our God," and "the day of temptation in the wilderness." In the latter case we know that though the temptation in the wilderness was called a "day," it lasted forty years. The time occupied in the destruction of Jerusalem might, on the same principle, be, with great propriety, termed "the day of the Lord." It was assuredly, we are told, a time of great trouble. I agree, therefore, with those commentators who regard it as probable

that the Prophet Zechariah had this period in his eye when he gave utterance to the words, and that, consequently, he did not refer to the personal coming of our Lord at all, either to reign on the earth in the Millennial sense of the expression, or to his coming to finally judge all mankind. This is the view taken, among others, by Poole; but what is more and better, I think that the second verse of the chapter warrants the opinion I have formed. Understanding the phrase "all nations," as our best expositors of Scripture do, to mean the Romans, then the masters of the whole civilised world, it appears to me that the awful events connected with the siege and destruction of Jerusalem answer with remarkable fidelity to the predictions of the Prophet Zechariah. There are, I admit, other parts of the chapter which do not seem to harmonise with this opinion, but they may refer to different matters altogether, which is a very common circumstance in the Bible.

But were I to go at length into my reasons for rejecting the Millenarian view of the passage, it would occupy a much greater amount

of space than I can devote to it without impairing the fulness of the discussion of other phases of the Millennial question.

The Millenarian view of the passage may be met in another way. All the advocates of the personal reign of Christ on earth admit that their conviction on that point can only be justified on the fact of the prophetic Scripture being interpreted *literally*. To that aspect of the Millennium question I have adverted at length in a chapter specially devoted to the purpose. Let me now, therefore, apply the *literal* test to that part of the passage under consideration on which Millenarians lay the greatest stress, and which constitutes the first clause in the fourth verse. "And his"—the Lord's—"feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives." The expression that our Lord's feet shall in that day stand upon the Mount of Olives, is, of course, consistently with their creed in relation to other points, taken literally. In this case, indeed, they attach a special importance to the literal construction of the words. Well, then, on the same principle of interpretation they ought to

render with an equally rigid literality the substantially similar expression which occurs in the first and second verses of the tenth chapter of Revelation. In these verses we read as follows:—"And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth." Now, will any Millenarian seriously say that he interprets this passage in a literal sense? Will he deliberately affirm that he fully believes that on the occasion to which the passage prophetically points, an angel will be literally seen with a rainbow on his head, his face resembling the sun, his feet being as pillars of fire, a little book open in his hand, while his *right foot is upon the sea, and his left foot on the earth*? And if no Millenarian will venture to interpret all this passage in a strictly literal sense, we have a right to ask for his reasons why he should insist on putting a strictly literal interpretation on the passage in Zechariah,

where it is said that the feet of our Lord will stand upon the Mount of Olives when the day of the Lord shall come? I can see no admissible reason why the latter passage should be interpreted literally and the other be regarded as figurative. Either put a literal construction on the passage in Revelation, or admit that the expression in the passage in Zechariah is figurative too.

But this is not the only difficulty which is incident to the strictly literal interpretation of this portion of Scripture. "Then," it is said in the third verse, "shall the Lord go forth and fight against those nations as when he fought in the day of battle." Now, *when* did the Lord *personally* go forth and fight against any nations in the day of battle? Millenarians are bound to answer the question. But as I have adverted to this point in my first volume, I shall not recur to it here. I will simply say that the Millenarians have no logical, any more than Scriptural, right to interpret the first two lines in the fourth verse of the chapter under consideration in a strictly literal sense, while the two last lines of the third verse are to be

understood as figurative. We must have both sentences, as in the case I have just referred to, interpreted in the same way. Let Millenarians say which principle of interpretation it is to be; but it cannot be conceded to them to adopt a literal interpretation in the one case and a figurative interpretation in the other, merely because that would best suit their system.

But even if it be conceded that the passage in Zechariah is to be understood in its literal sense, I do not see on what grounds Millenarians can conclude, so confidently as they do, that the passage refers to the Second Coming of Christ to reign personally on the earth. They are not unacquainted with the fact that many—indeed the great majority—of our most distinguished divines, past and present, concur in the opinion that this coming of our Lord, viewed in conjunction with the fifth verse, alluded to his coming at the last day to judge the world. All Christians are agreed that our Lord will one day come in person to judge the world; and if the prophet Zechariah's words regarding his feet standing on the Mount of Olives are to be understood

literally—which I do not see to be a future fact clearly revealed—I should say the allusion is to Christ's feet standing on the Mount of Olives when he comes to judge the world at the last day. At any rate, there is nothing in the words themselves, nor in any part of the chapter in which they occur, which furnishes any ground, however slight, for the conclusion that the reference is to our Lord's personal advent contemporaneously with the commencement of the Millennium.

Let us now, in accordance with our purpose as already intimated, direct our unprejudiced and prayerful attention to the utterances of the New Testament on the subject of the Second Coming of our Lord; and as our space would not admit of our examining every passage which relates, more or less directly, to that event, let us confine our attention to those portions in the latter part of the sacred volume which Millenarians themselves regard as the great pillars on which their system rests.

And first of all let us listen to the words of our Lord himself, spoken by him during the days of his sojourn on earth. Much

of what he said on this, as on most other subjects, was spoken either in prophecy or in parables. His references to his return to our world, as expressed in the language of prophecy or in parables, were perhaps more frequent than on other subjects : but while Millenarians appropriate almost everything which fell from his lips in relation to his return to our world, as referring to his coming to set up a visible kingdom, and himself to reign personally with his saints over it, I feel persuaded that his language on all such occasions can be proved to have been applicable only to his coming either in Providence or by the Holy Spirit, or to judge all mankind at the end of the world. I use the latter words, “the end of the world,” not as Millenarians always do, as meaning exclusively “the end of the age,” or “the end of the dispensation,” but as meaning that greatest and most momentous of all events which I have indicated on my title-page—namely, “The End of All Things.” And this event is, I hold, to be contemporaneous with the universal and final judgment of all who have ever inhabited our earth.

The advocates of the personal reign of Christ on earth do injustice to those who are opposed to their views when they represent us as maintaining that the phrase "end of the world" *always* means the destruction of our globe. We do not hold any such opinion. We readily admit that the expression, "the end of the world," means in various portions of the New Testament the end of the age, or of the dispensation. All that we contend for is, that as the phrase will admit of two constructions, it must be left to the reader who intelligently and prayerfully views the words in the connection in which they are used, to decide as to which is the right interpretation in that particular instance.

Dr. Tregelles, in his recently published small work, entitled, "The Hope of Christ's Second Coming," contends, as many other Millenarians had done before him, that the expression "the end of the world," as employed by the four disciples of Christ—Peter, Andrew, James, and John—in the third verse of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, were accepted by them as meaning the end of the age. The

verse consists of a request made to Jesus, and a question put to him by his disciples. "And as he sat upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" My own conviction is that the disciples did not mean, when they thus expressed themselves, the then existing age or dispensation, but the end of the world in the sense in which it is usually understood. It is to be remembered that the question, "What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?" which was put by the disciples to Christ, was occasioned by what he had said immediately before to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He had foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, and that it was to take place before that generation had passed away. Naturally filled with alarm at the intimation, it was a natural question for the disciples to put to their Lord—"Tell us when shall these things be?" It is not improbable that they, in their own minds, associated the end of the world with the destruction of Jerusalem—a

supposition which will render natural the second question, "When shall be the end of the world?" That it was not the end of the present dispensation and the coming of Christ to reign personally on earth, but the end of the world in the literal acceptation of the phrase, which the disciples had in their minds when they put the question to their Lord relative to the time at which the world would be brought to an end, appears to me still further manifest from the thirty-ninth verse of the preceding chapter, where Christ says to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, "Ye shall not see me henceforth till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

If the Millenarians still maintain that Christ here refers to his Second Coming for the purpose of reigning personally on earth, they can only do so at the expense of one of the most prominent parts of their system. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were immersed in guilt; the cup of their iniquity was full, and the most awful Divine judgments were about to be poured out upon them. Christ had even declared in the thirty-third verse that they

could not "escape the damnation of hell." It therefore follows that as the Millenarian theory is based on the hypothesis that when Christ comes to reign personally on earth, the saints only that sleep in their graves will be raised, and see and meet their glorious Lord. These guilty inhabitants of Jerusalem, dying, as we know they did, in impenitence, will not see Christ at all on his coming to reign personally on earth. They will, according to the Millenarian view of the passage in Revelation in which it is said, "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished," remain in their graves for at least the thousand years during which Christ is to reign visibly on earth.

It appears to me clear that only in the sense I have mentioned did the disciples of Christ understand the language of their Lord. And so interpreting his words, they put to him the question, "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" They regarded the two events—Christ's "coming" and "the end of the world"—as events which were associated together, and destined to take

place contemporaneously. What follows from the twenty-ninth verse of the chapter till the end, I regard as Christ's answer to the question of his disciples, as referring to his "coming" to judgment, and "the end of the world." What precedes the twenty-ninth verse of the chapter I understand to relate to the first question of the disciples, "Tell us when these things shall be?" This last opinion seems to me to be established in the most conclusive manner from intervening verses between the first and twenty-ninth. I pass over several such proofs, and content myself with a few. In the ninth verse Jesus says to his disciples, "They shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall *kill* you, and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake." This was so obviously meant for the disciples whom Christ then addressed, in answer to their question, that I wonder how a man of Dr. Tregelles' knowledge of Scripture, and clear perception usually of Scripture truth, should contend that it was equally meant by our Lord to apply to all Christ's disciples in every intervening age until the Second Coming of Christ in glory to

usher in the Millennium. It proved to be literally true of all the disciples whom Christ then and thus addressed, that they were not only cruelly persecuted, but *killed*; whereas it is a very rare thing now—not one case in many millions—that Christians are persecuted in the stricter sense of the word, for their Christianity; while a man being put to death for his discipleship to Christ is much rarer still.

But the misconception of Dr. Tregelles and others on this point is not only proved by this passage, but by various others in the same chapter. That the meaning of Christ, when he employed the expression “all these things,” was limited to what was to happen before and at the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, is placed beyond all doubt in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth verses. “Then,” said our Lord, “let them which be in Judæa flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.”

The calamities predicted by our Lord are proved to have been predicted as about to be-

fall the then existing race of Jews, specially if not exclusively, by the words, "Let them who be in *Judæa* flee into the mountains," and "him who is on the housetop not come down to take anything that is in the house," because to have flat roofs, on which the Jews spent much of their time, was at that period a characteristic of Jewish houses. That the words of Jesus in the passage under consideration were confined to the destruction of Jerusalem and the intervening period between the time at which our Lord spoke, is further proved by what Christ said in the twentieth verse. "But pray ye," says Jesus, "that your flight be not in the *winter*, neither on the Sabbath-day." If the reference here had been, as most if not all Millenarians maintain it was, to the Second Coming of Christ to set up a kingdom on earth, over which he should reign in person, there could be no appropriateness in the exhortation which he gave his four disciples—an exhortation equally meant for all his disciples—to pray that their flight might not be in the winter. When our Lord comes to establish a personal dynasty on earth, he

will, according to the Millenarian creed, raise the dead from their graves, and transform the living saints, and “take vengeance on them who know not God.” There can consequently be no fleeing on the part of those workers of iniquity on that solemn occasion. Jesus, therefore, could never have exhorted either saints or sinners, on his Second Coming to reign personally on earth—assuming, for the sake of argument, that the Millenarian scheme is Scriptural—to pray that their flight might not be in the winter. As regards, again, our Lord’s exhortation to pray that their flight might not be on the Sabbath-day, that would have been no less inapplicable, for other nations did not recognise the sanctity of the Sabbath-day: such recognition was made by the Jews alone. Nor, if the word “Sabbath-day” be intended to mean our Sunday, will the matter be found more favourable for the Millenarians? The world, according to their view, will, at Christ’s Second Coming, be sunk in a state of indifference to Divine things, and be overflowed by the floods of iniquity to an extent hitherto unparalleled, and therefore the moral obliga-

tion to keep holy the Christian Sabbath will not be recognised in theory, much less embodied in practice. The exhortation of Christ, therefore, to pray that their flight might not be on the Sabbath-day would be altogether out of place; for the world generally, at the period of Christ's Second Coming, will neither recognise the sanctity of the Sabbath, nor will they be a praying people at all.

This part of the chapter manifestly referred to the awful judgments which were about to come upon Jerusalem. It is to me all the more surprising that any other construction should have been put on the first twenty-six verses, seeing that history bears its clear and decided testimony to the literal fulfilment, in the experience of the Jews of that and the succeeding generation, of all that our Lord predicted as about to happen.

So far, therefore, the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew does not give the semblance of countenance to the Millenarian belief in the Second Coming of Christ to reign personally on earth; neither, as far as I am a competent interpreter of this portion of God's

Word, does anything which occurs in the remaining verses of the chapter give the slightest sanction to the notion of a personal reign of Christ on the earth. I regard the rest of the chapter as chiefly relating to the judgment-day, but mingled in some parts with allusions to the destruction which was about to overtake Jerusalem, with the calamities which should precede that awful catastrophe. I am aware that some eminent divines—among whom was the late Richard Watson—have strenuously maintained that, from the twenty-ninth verse down till the close of the chapter, the references are *exclusively* to the judgment-day. I do not see how this opinion can be made to accord with the thirty-third and thirty-fourth verses, where it is said, “So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is nigh, even at the door. Verily I say unto you, that *this* generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.” This was spoken by our Lord, be it remembered, to the same four disciples, in speaking to whom he had, in the beginning of the chapter, employed the expression “these things,” in answer to their ques-

tion, "When shall these things be?" No expositor of this portion of Scripture has, so far as I know, ever put any other construction on the phrase "these things," as used by Christ in the twenty-third chapter, and the four apostles in the commencement of this chapter; and I cannot discern any ground for adopting a different construction here. Besides, it is important to notice that our Lord, in the thirty-fourth verse of this twenty-fourth chapter makes use of the expression, "this generation," in connection with the phrase "these things," which is an equivalent utterance, almost in words as well as in import, with that which he used in the thirty-sixth verse of the preceding chapter, when he said, "All these things shall come upon *this* generation." Now, as it is admitted on all hands that the latter expression of our Lord refers to the destruction of Jerusalem and the terrible tribulations which were to precede and accompany that event, it appears to me sufficiently clear that, in the thirty-third and thirty-fourth verses of the twenty-fourth chapter, our Lord still alludes to the awful calamities which were

impending over Jerusalem. Bishop Newton, indeed, maintains that the whole of the chapter alludes exclusively to the destruction of Jerusalem and the calamities therewith connected. "It is," he says, "to me a wonder how any one can refer part of the foregoing discourse to the destruction of Jerusalem, and part to the end of the world, or any distant event, when it is said so positively in this conclusion—'All these things shall be fulfilled in this generation.' " Scott, in his exposition of the chapter, adopts the same view as Bishop Newton. There are, however, very few others among our eminent annotators of Scripture, who share the opinions, on this point, of these two distinguished divines.

It appears strange to me that one so singularly clear in his moral perceptions, and possessed of so sound a judgment, as Thomas Scott, should fail to see that his idea that *all* this twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew related exclusively to the calamities which were coming on Jerusalem, could not be the correct one,—were there no other ground for a different opinion than is furnished in the twenty-ninth verse.

In that verse it is distinctly stated that certain events are to take place “immediately *after* the tribulation of those days.” According to the only admissible interpretation of the words, greater calamities were to take place *subsequent* to “the tribulation of those days”—that is, at some future period after the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Now, we know from the records of authentic history that in the prolonged interval which has taken place since the fall of Jerusalem, and the calamities to the Jewish people which accompanied that appalling event, no such catastrophes have occurred as are specified in the twenty-ninth verse; consequently, they must still be in the womb of the future. I therefore repeat the expression of my wonder that such men as Thomas Scott, and some others no less mighty in the Scriptures than he, should ever have adopted the notion that *all* the chapter relates to occurrences preceding or accompanying the fall of Jerusalem.

And as it is admitted by all expositors of the Word of God that these events have not occurred, they must, as just remarked, take

place at some future period, for we have Christ's own testimony for the fact that not one iota of what he hath said can ever fail of its accomplishment. Heaven and earth, he tells us, shall pass away, but his words shall not pass away. And as other portions of Scripture clearly point, in similar language, to the day of judgment as the period when such signs and wonders, indicative of the Second Advent of Christ, as are here specified, are to take place, we are justified in concluding that the references in the twenty-ninth verse are to the events which shall precede and accompany the final judgment of the world.

It does not in the slightest degree affect the soundness of this inference that it is said that the appalling calamities alluded to are to follow "*immediately* after the tribulation of those days." The language of Scripture often speaks of remote events as if they were just at hand. Peter, for instance, speaks of the "sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow," as predicted by the prophets who wrote during the Old Testament dispensation; yet we know that the glory of Christ, as the consequence of

his sufferings, has not hitherto, so far as this world is concerned, been witnessed, although nearly two thousand years have elapsed since Peter penned the words. Christ himself, to mention no other illustration of this, said at the close of the Revelation, which is the close of the Bible, "Behold, I come quickly," yet we know that he has not come yet. This holds equally true, whether we regard the Millenarian belief that Christ is to come to reign personally on earth, or the more generally accepted interpretation of the words, that he meant that he would come at the period of the final judgment. It is not, therefore, any argument against the notion that the calamities specified as destined to come on our world in the words which follow the phrase, "after the tribulation of those days," that they refer to events which are to precede the day of the general judgment. Should any one wish for further illustrations of this, he will find several in Dr. Angus's "Handbook of the Bible."

But I must not devote too much space to the examination of points which, after all, do not so directly bear on the question of the

Millennium. If Bishop Newton and Scott be right—and their opinions are shared by other learned and able theologians—the whole of this chapter is swept away from beneath the edifice of Millenarianism. Indeed, though formerly this twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew was regarded by Millenarians as one of the strongest pillars of their system, some of the most zealous of their number have ceased to lay much stress upon it. The late Rev. Mr. Hewitson, as mentioned in one of his letters to a friend, quoted by the Rev. Mr. Baillie in his memoir of that excellent man, virtually gives up this chapter as constituting a ground for Millenarianism, and invites those who wish to examine the subject to study the second chapter of the Second Epistle of the Thessalonians.

But though the twenty-fourth chapter gives no sanction to the notion of a personal reign of Christ on earth, I think it can be made so clear as to leave no room in any reasonable mind for doubt, that a large portion of it does refer to the day of judgment. And if that fact can be established it will deprive Mille-

narians of any pretext for quoting it in favour of their views.

Let us now recur to a consideration of the statements of our Saviour on the subject of his coming a second time to our earth, made in this twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew. The first reference to the day on which God will judge all the world by Christ Jesus occurs in the twenty-ninth verse, and is continued in the two following verses:—"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened," says our Lord, "and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." The darkening of the sun, and the moon ceasing to give her light, and the stars

falling from heaven, and the powers of the heavens being shaken, mentioned in the twenty-ninth verse, could not have been meant by Christ to apply to the calamities which had befallen Jerusalem, because we know from Josephus, and other accredited historians of that eventful period in the annals of the Jews, that no such natural phenomena took place. The Millenarians concur with me in one sense in relation to this point. They maintain that the twenty-ninth verse refers to what will take place on the eve of the coming of Christ,—only they say that his coming will be to reign personally on earth, instead of being applicable, as I believe, and as it will be my endeavour to prove, to the advent of Jesus, when he comes to judge the world at the last day. In the thirtieth verse we are told that after the phenomena mentioned in the twenty-ninth verse have been witnessed, there shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. Then, it is added, all the tribes of the earth shall mourn when they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. In the thirty-first verse it is further

said that Christ shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and that they shall gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. Now, as the Millenarians, with one accord, vehemently condemn figurative interpretations of Scripture where they relate to their Millenarian views, and contend for literal renderings, they cannot, with any show of reason, refuse to admit that the three verses under consideration ought to be construed on the literal principle. Well, then, we know, as we have before said, that such events as are specified in the verses in question never took place. The phenomena described were never witnessed. And if these phenomena have not yet occurred, it follows that they must be witnessed at some future period. The Millenarians maintain that that future period will be the second coming of Christ to establish a visible kingdom on earth, to be presided over by himself. On the other hand, my full conviction is, that the references in the three verses alluded to are to the day of judgment, when the world will have literally come to an end. I will give

as plainly as I can a few out of many reasons for the belief which, on this point, I so firmly cherish.

But before quoting with this view any of the other instances in which Jesus speaks of himself as coming again to our world in the "clouds of heaven," or in the "glory of his Father and the holy angels," it is right I should mention that in so expressing himself, Jesus, with a slight variation, employed the language of the Prophet Daniel. In the thirteenth verse of the seventh chapter of his book, Daniel says, "I saw in the night visions, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him." I wonder that any enlightened commentator on the Word of God could doubt that this verse refers to the coming of Christ to judgment. And yet there are those who not only doubt that the verse relates to the final judgment of *all* mankind, but who entirely reject the notion of its having such an application. Among eminent expositors of the book of Daniel, who repudiate the idea that

the coming of our Lord to the final judgment of all mankind, is pointed to in this passage, is the eminent commentator, Thomas Scott. He admits that "it looks like" a reference to the final judgment, but that in reality it does not relate to that great event. He grounds his opinion that it does not refer to the general judgment, on the assumption that the "Ancient of Days," whom he regards as God the Father, not Christ the Son, is represented as sitting in judgment; whereas, adds Mr. Scott, we know that Christ is, by the special appointment of God, to judge the whole world at the last day.

I cannot see even the slightest force in this argument, because we know that both the Father and the Son, God and Christ, are spoken of, as if the phrases were interchangeable as the Judges of mankind. In various passages of the Old Testament God the Father is spoken of as the Judge of all the world. "He" (God), says the Psalmist, "cometh to judge the earth; he shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth." "God," says Solomon, "shall judge the right-

eous and the wicked.” And again, “God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” Those who would like to see numerous instances in the Old Testament of God being spoken of as our final Judge, I would refer to a very useful book for facilitating success in one’s endeavours to find out particular passages of Scripture, entitled, “The Bible Text Cyclopædia,” by the Rev. James Ingles. It is published by Messrs. Gall and Ingles, of Edinburgh.

The instances, too, are numerous in the New Testament in which God is spoken of as the Judge of all mankind. I will only quote two of these instances. The first is a very remarkable one, because within the space of a few lines we have both God and Christ placed before us as respectively to be our final Judge. In the tenth verse of the fourteenth chapter of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle of the Gentiles says, “We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ;” while in the twelfth verse he says, “Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God.” Nothing

could be more plain from this than that God the Father and God the Son are equally to be regarded as the final Judge of all mankind. In a previous part of the same epistle, Paul expresses himself on this point in these words :—“ After thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God ; who will render to every man according to his deeds. In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.” Could language speak more plainly than this in placing God the Father before us as the final Judge of the world ? In the twenty-second and twenty-third verses of the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the inspired writer of that epistle says to the Hebrew believers in Jesus, when pointing out to them the higher and holier privileges which they enjoyed under the Christian dispensation, as compared with that which it had superseded :—“ But ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general

assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." Here God is spoken of as the sole and supreme Judge of all who ever have lived, or ever will live on this earth. As it will be in his *divine* capacity, or as God, that Christ will judge the world at the last day, the words God and Christ, as applied to the final judgment, may, I repeat, be looked on as interchangeable. There can be no error or mistake in the conclusions of the great Judge on that momentous occasion. They will be equally the conclusions of the Father and the Son. On the same principle, though we know that Christ is, in an especial sense, *the* Saviour of the world, just as he will be in a special sense *the* Judge of all mankind at the last day, yet the term "Saviour" is often applied to God the Father in the Old Testament, and in several instances in the New. I need not give any quotations to this effect from the Old Testament Scriptures, and will only give two from the latter portion of the Bible. "We trust," says Paul in the tenth verse of the fourth

chapter of his First Epistle to Timothy, “we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.” And the same apostle, in the fourth and fifth verses of the third chapter of his Epistle to Titus, expresses himself in this wise:—“After that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.”

But there is another light in which the matter can be placed which does away the objection of Scott to the verse in question being regarded as pointing to the judgment of the great day. My conviction is, that instead of the phrase “Ancient of Days” being intended to be applied to God the Father, it was intended to be applied to God the Son. The phrase “Ancient of Days” occurs three times in the chapter. It occurs first in the ninth verse, but it is necessary in considering the phrase, as we find it in that verse, to read the following verse in connection with it. “I beheld,” says Daniel, “till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit,

whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened." Now, I cannot conceive how any one can fail to perceive how strikingly this description of the "Ancient of Days" accords with what is said of Christ Jesus in various parts of the Revelation. In these it will be seen that a personal description of our Lord and Saviour is given, which so much resembles what is said by Daniel of the "Ancient of Days," that no one, it might be supposed, could fail to identify the "Ancient of Days" of Daniel, with the Lord Jesus Christ of the Seer of the Isle of Patmos. To mention only one such similarity, it will be seen that John, in speaking of Christ, makes use of substantially the same language as Daniel did regarding "The Ancient of Days" in the passage I have quoted. "His head and his hair," says John, in the four-

teenth and fifteenth verses of the first chapter, "were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters." I am further confirmed in my belief that the expression "Ancient of Days" is especially applicable to the Lord Jesus from the manner in which it recurs in the twenty-second verse of the same chapter. "Until the Ancient of Days," says Daniel, in the verse in question, "came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High, and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." Now we know that it is Christ the Son, not God the Father, who is to come to our world for the purposes of judgment, and to give the saints possession of the kingdom. My belief therefore is, that the right interpretation of the phrase, "Ancient of Days," is to regard it as primarily meant to apply to Christ.

I admit that there is a difficulty here arising from the expression that the one like the Son of Man came, with the clouds of heaven, "to the Ancient of Days," because that would seem

to read as if Christ came, as the Son of Man, to himself as the Ancient of Days. Possibly the difficulty might be obviated if we were to consider the phrase as referring to Christ in his twofold capacity of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father, and the Mediator, or the God-man. In the latter sense, Christ might come, in virtue of some special arrangement in the economy of human redemption, to himself as God, only in the essential meaning of the word. In connection with this point, I would especially call attention to what God the Father says to Christ the Son in the sixth verse of the forty-fifth Psalm:—"Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." This is the language addressed to our Lord and Saviour by God the Father. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews repeats the language in the eighth verse of his first chapter, where we read:—"But unto the Son he (that is, God the Father) saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." Isaiah, too, in the sixth verse of the eighth chapter of his prophecy applies to Christ names which are usually applied only to God the Father. "His name" (Christ's

name), says that prophet, "shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the *mighty God, the everlasting Father*, the Prince of Peace." And if Jesus is thus spoken of in other parts of Scripture, there surely can be nothing unreasonable in the supposition that it is Christ whom Daniel meant by the "Ancient of Days."

But these are not the only reasons which can be given for understanding the expression in question in this sense. It is said in the ninth verse, that after "the thrones were cast down, the Ancient of Days did sit." I think it is clear that by this is meant that, after earthly kingdoms were destroyed, the "Ancient of Days" assumed that universal and supreme sovereignty which was his right. Now, this can only refer to the mediatorial reign of Christ over the nations which will take place during the Millennial period,—a reign, as I believe, not personally on earth, but by the prevalence and power of Christian principles in the hearts, and regulating the lives of the great majority of mankind. "The judgment being set, and the books opened," as mentioned in the next verse, is essentially the same phraseology as is

employed in the Revelation, and which Scott himself admits alludes to the final judgment alone by our Lord. Then there is the expression in the twenty-second verse, "Until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the Most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom." "The Ancient of Days," as the phrase is used here, must, I hold, refer to Christ, because in the New Testament substantially the same phraseology is employed in different parts,—which Scott expounds in his Commentary as applying to Christ alone when he shall come to judge the world.

But if there be, as I have admitted there is, a difficulty in the passage, I would remind those who would magnify that difficulty to such an extent as would make it fatal to our argument, that in the same passage there is another difficulty which they cannot explain in accordance with their own views. The words to which I allude are these—" *They brought him near before him;*" that is, the Son of man to the "Ancient of Days." Now, will any of those who deny that the expression "Ancient

of Days” means Christ, explain who are they who thus bring the Son of man to the “Ancient of Days?” Is the allusion to angels, or to the spirits of the just made perfect in glory? On either supposition—and I know of no other intelligences to whom it could apply—I can discover no propriety in the phrase; and it is to me the source of no small satisfaction to find that so eminent an expositor of Holy Writ as Poole should have taken the same view of the expression. The words of that able annotator of the Word of God are—“The Ancient of Days, Christ the King and Judge of all, called ‘the Ancient of Days,’ because of his eternal deity, ‘without beginning of days or end of years.’”

I will only make one other observation in relation to the opinion of Scott on this point. While admitting that the language is especially applicable to the general judgment, he denies that it does refer to that event, and goes on to say, that “the fulfilment of this prophecy will precede the introduction of the Millennium.” Now this is just what the Millenarians maintain, and, therefore, though no

commentator on the Scriptures, nor, indeed, any divine of eminence, was ever more opposed to Millenarianism than Scott, this is making an important concession to them. It is so even with the qualification that he regarded the idea of a personal reign of Christ as wholly unsanctioned by Scripture, and only believed in a spiritual reign of our Lord. What makes the inconsistency of Scott all the greater on this point is, that he strenuously maintains that the parallel passages of the Word of God in the evangelists and the Revelation, do relate to the general judgment.

I have dwelt at greater length on the passages in question than I should otherwise have done, because of their great importance as bearing on our argument, that the chief portions of Scripture which the Millenarians adduce in support of their notion that Christ is to come a second time to our world to reign personally on it for a thousand years, refer to his coming to earth for the purpose of finally judging all mankind. What gives all the greater importance to the fact of its being proved that the passages in Daniel to which we have adverted

refer to Christ's coming at the end of the world to judge the whole earth, and not for the purpose of personally reigning with his saints in this world as the Millenarians say,—is the fact that nearly all our Lord's own representations of the circumstances under which he will come a second time to our earth, seem as if he had had especially in his mind, when so expressing himself, the language of the Prophet Daniel, to which I have adverted. The same may be said of the language of some of the apostles, when referring to the Second Coming of Christ.

First of all, let us compare some expressions in the passage in question with expressions in other passages in Scripture which are almost universally admitted, except by extreme Millenarians, to relate to the coming of Christ to judge the world at the last day. "They shall see," says Jesus in the latter clause of the thirtieth verse, "They shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great *glory*." In the twenty-seventh verse of the sixteenth chapter of the same Gospel, it is stated that "the Son of Man

shall come in the *glory* of his Father, with his holy angels." Now it is, I hold, placed beyond all reasonable ground for question, that this latter allusion to the Second Advent of Christ, is to his coming, not to reign personally on earth, but to judgment; for it is added in the next clause of the verse, "and then he shall reward *every* man according to his *works*." This is as plainly a reference to the judgment-day as that other expression of Paul, "We must *all* appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that *every* one may receive the things done in his body *according* to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." And if the verse in the sixteenth chapter of Matthew, which so distinctly asserts the coming of Christ to judgment, when he next appears personally in our world, speaks of Christ's coming in essentially similar phraseology to that employed by our Lord in the thirtieth verse of the twenty-fourth chapter, I do not see how any one can resist the conclusion, that in the latter verse the allusion is to his coming to our earth for the purpose of judging all mankind. Were the reference to be to his coming per-

sonally to reign on earth, it could not be said that on his Second Advent he would reward or give to *every* man *according* to his works, because if the Millennial theory be true, the wicked will remain in their graves for a thousand years afterwards, and only then appear before the judgment-seat of Christ to receive the punishment due to their sins. So clear is this that even Mr. T. R. Birks, in his "Outlines of Unfulfilled Prophecy," does not profess to discern Millenarianism in the three verses of Matthew on which we are remarking. He admits that they refer to the coming of Christ to judge the world. "Certainly," he says, "the only natural view of the verses is to apply them to an event far more august and solemn than the fall of Jerusalem, and to a time when the Lord Jesus will personally appear to be the judge *of the world*."

There is some similarity as respects what is said of the glory in which Christ shall come a second time in the passage under consideration, in the thirty-eighth verse of the eighth chapter of the Gospel by Mark:—"Whosoever therefore," says our Lord, "shall be ashamed of

me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of Man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." In the Gospel by Luke we have the same statement of our Lord with this difference—that instead of his coming only in the glory of his Father, with the holy angels, he will come in his own glory also. The Millenarians claim the passages in question, as given by both evangelists, as confirmatory of their conviction that he is to come to reign personally on earth. I cannot see the semblance of a reason for this construction of the words of our Lord, either as recorded by Mark or Luke. The fact of Christ's being ashamed, when he comes, of those who were ashamed of him and his words when he sojourned in our world and ministered publicly among men, in his character of the Saviour of the human race, appears to me most clearly to refer to what will be witnessed on the day of final judgment. There is a passage in the eighth and ninth verses of the twelfth chapter of the Gospel by the last-named evangelist which I regard as essentially parallel to the

one under consideration. “Whosoever,” says our Lord, “shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God: but he that denieth me before men shall be denied before the angels of God.” I consider these words of our Saviour as conveying the same meaning as those in Mark and Luke, where he says that whosoever should be ashamed of him—meaning in this world—of them will he be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. Nor can I see how any one that is willing to put a natural construction on the language of Scripture can for a moment doubt that each of the phrases which I have quoted from the three evangelists, refers to the appearance of Christ at the day of final judgment.

But I now come to a passage in connection with the Second Coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, to which I bespeak the especial attention of my readers. It is, like the other passages to which I have adverted, one which contains the words of our Lord himself. It will be found in the sixty-fourth verse of the twenty-sixth chapter of Matthew’s Gospel.

The words of Jesus, spoken on this occasion, were uttered by him when arraigned before the high priest, and within a few hours of his crucifixion. The high priest, in reference to the charge preferred against our Lord, of making himself equal with God, had, in the preceding verse, adjured Jesus to tell the court whether or not he was the Christ, or, rather, considered himself to be the "Christ, the Son of God." To this appeal, or interrogation, our Lord answered as follows :—"Thou hast said : nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Here we have the express declaration of our Lord in reference to a particular individual, that hereafter that individual should see the Son of Man—Christ himself—sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven. Now, the Millenarian notion is, as I have had to remark more than once, that for at least a thousand years after Christ's coming to earth personally to establish a visible kingdom, all the workers of iniquity will remain in

their graves. It follows as a necessary consequence, that as the high priest who condemned Jesus, adding that his guilt was so clear that there was no need of further witnesses, unquestionably belonged to the category of the wicked, he could not, according to the Millenarian theory, see the Lord when he should come a second time to our world. He would be among them who are to remain in their graves during the whole of the Millennium, which is to last for a thousand years. It follows, therefore, that when Christ said to the high priest, that hereafter he would see him—the same Jesus who then stood arraigned at his bar as a criminal of the greatest magnitude—sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven, he did not refer to his advent to reign personally on earth. The words of our Lord on this occasion could only apply, and *did* demonstrably apply, to his coming to judge the world at the last day. For then *every* eye shall see him, and this high priest among the number. He will see our Lord in circumstances the very reverse of those which existed when Christ thus spoke.

The position and place of our Lord and the high priest will be changed. The high priest then sat on the right hand of power, for his power and authority were then supreme; but now Jesus will be supreme in power and authority. Hence there was a beautiful propriety in the expression of our Lord, that the high priest should see him "sitting on the right hand of power." What a change! But on that point I will not dwell. I will simply say that this one brief passage of Scripture, even did it stand alone, would suffice to subvert the entire Millenarian fabric. I regard this as demonstration itself, because if it be thus proved that Christ could not mean a personal advent to reign on earth by the language in question, and could *only* have meant the general judgment, all similar passages must be interpreted on the same principle.

I shall only in this place advert to one more passage of Scripture, which relates to the Second Coming of Christ in clouds, and which I regard as clearly referring to his coming to judge the world at the last day. The passage will be found in the seventh verse of the first chapter

of the Revelation, though the words employed in the other quotations I have made with respect to his coming in the glory of his Father and with holy angels are not in this last passage. The same glorious coming of our Lord is evidently implied in what John, in his exile in Patmos, says, especially when viewed in connection with the "glory and dominion for ever and ever" ascribed to our Lord in the previous verse. Bishop Newcome bears out this view. "Behold," is the language of John, "he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen." This is one of the favourite texts with Millenarians, as confirmatory of their views of Christ's coming to reign personally on earth. I, on the other hand, could scarcely name a verse in the New Testament which has any reference to the Second Coming of our Lord at all, which gives less of even the semblance of a sanction to the Millenarian hypothesis. They regard it, as has been frequently mentioned, as one of the chief pillars of their system, that all who have lived

ungodly lives and died in a state of impenitence will remain in their graves for a thousand years after the advent of our Lord, whereas it is here distinctly stated that when he comes *every* eye shall see him. Language so explicit as this with regard to the fact of Christ's being *universally* seen when he comes, would of itself, had the verse ended there, sufficed to prove that his coming was to be, not to reign with his saints on the earth, but to the final judgment. But further confirmation of this view is furnished in the succeeding clause of the verse, where it is said, "and they also who *pierced* him." Now, unless the wicked are to be raised from their graves when, according to the Millenarian theory, Christ comes again to reign visibly on earth—which concession would sap the foundations of the Millenarian system, and consequently cannot be made by any Millenarian—it cannot be true that they who *pierced* the Lord will see him on his Second Advent. But this is not all the evidence which the verse in question affords to disprove the Millenarian view of Christ's Second Advent, and to prove that it is to the general

judgment of the world at the last day, that the verse refers. "All kindreds of the earth," it is added, "shall wail because of him." Now this, if any reliance can be placed in the plain meaning of the words, can only apply to the day of judgment, because then only will every eye see Jesus, and all the kindreds of the earth—all the nations of the world, with the exception of those who have believed in him—will wail because of him. The meaning is obviously the same as that of the fourteenth and fifteenth verses of the Epistle of Jude, where it is said, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." The meaning of the verses in question is also the same essentially, though the language be different, as that of the sixteenth and seventeenth verses of the sixth chapter of the same book of Revelation, where we read, "And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of

him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?" If such language as this does not apply to the day of the general judgment, when the unconverted will be filled with consternation and horror at the sight of their Judge, instead of to the advent of Christ to reign personally on our planet, it is high time that we ceased to seek for any definite meaning in language. In confirmation of the accuracy of the construction which I have put on the seventh verse of the first chapter of the Revelation, I can quote the authority of Dr. Gill, to whose views on various occasions I have already adverted, because, as before mentioned, he is one of the ablest and most learned divines that ever occupied a place in the ranks of Millenarianism. Nothing could be more decided than the manner in which he expresses himself as to the verse in question relating to the general judgment, and to that momentous event alone. I might quote from the writings of other Millenarians to the same effect. But the consideration of other passages in the New

Testament, in which Christ is spoken of as coming again to our world with clouds and in great glory, will more properly come before us for examination hereafter. To some of these I will have occasion to advert in my present volume, and to others in my next, which will conclude my writings on the subject of Millenarianism.

CHAPTER V.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST—HIS OWN
WORDS ON THE SUBJECT. (*Continued.*)

LET us now return to the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, and advert to another part of it, which seems to prove beyond all question that it refers to the coming of Christ to judge the world. I refer to the thirty-sixth, thirty-seventh, thirty-eighth, and thirty-ninth verses. "But of that day and hour," says our Saviour, "knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only. But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of

man be.” Millenarians maintain that all this relates exclusively to the coming of Christ personally to set up his kingdom on earth; while some of our most approved commentators, among whom may be mentioned Scott, affirm that it refers *exclusively* to the fall of Jerusalem, which was to occur before the then generation passed away. With regard to those who hold the latter opinion, I would simply say, in the first place, that the fact of Christ’s knowing that the destruction of Jerusalem was to take place before the then existing generation passed away—and it *did* occur forty years after the words were spoken by Christ—renders it improbable that he should not also have known the exact time at which it would take place; and if so, he could not with propriety have said that his Father only knew the day or the hour in which Jerusalem should be destroyed.

But putting this argument aside, the destruction of Jerusalem and the calamities by which it was preceded, accompanied, and followed, could not have been the only events which our Lord had in his eye when he said,

“But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven, but my Father only,” because the advent to which he refers resembled in some of its more important attendant circumstances the catastrophe of Noah’s flood. If the allusion here by Christ to “that day and that hour” was to the coming fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple, and the calamities by which these events were to be accompanied, the reference to the flood would not have been appropriate,—at least as compared to what it would be if it regarded the coming of Christ to judge the world. That it does not hold good as relates to the destruction of Jerusalem, viewed in connection with Christ’s reference to the Noachian flood, is clear from the fact that the visitation which was about to come on Jerusalem was only to be—and the event showed it was—a very partial calamity. Its area only embraced really Jerusalem itself and a limited portion of Judea. In the case of the flood it was different: that Divine judgment was universal. It embraced the whole human race, with the exception of the eight persons whom God especially ap-

pointed to be saved. The cases, therefore, are not parallel ; and consequently I hold that the allusions of our Lord to “the day and the hour” of which no one knew anything, could not have been to the catastrophe which was destined to occur in Jerusalem.

But apply the words of Christ—“Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only”—to the advent of Christ to judge the world at the last day, and it will be seen that the language of our Lord possesses a special propriety. In the days of Noe, the inhabitants of the world—the eight persons always excepted—were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, and knew not until the flood came and took them all away. And here I may parenthetically say, that as this language of our Lord implies a state of entire indifference to and forgetfulness of the fact, that awful calamities were destined to come on those to whom the reference was made, that reference could not be to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, because they had been so explicitly, so emphatically, and so solemnly warned by

our Lord of the calamities which were sure to befall themselves, and the destruction which was destined to come upon their city and Temple, that they could not have been forgetful of the fact that such terrible calamities were impending, and consequently could not be taken by surprise when they did overtake them. Besides, we know that long before the fall of Jerusalem took place it was besieged by the Roman army, and consequently its destruction must have been regarded as an event of at least not improbable occurrence. I need not add, that the apprehension of the destruction of their city and Temple must have unfitted the Jews for the due discharge of the ordinary duties of life, and especially must have diverted their minds from those ideas associated with the fact of marrying and giving in marriage, and otherwise indulging in the pleasures of a gay or worldly life.

I contend, then, that this is an unanswerable argument in refutation of those—including, probably, a majority of our most popular commentators on the Bible—who maintain that the whole of this twenty-fourth chapter of

Matthew relates exclusively to the destruction which was about to come upon Jerusalem.

Among those of more modern times who concur with the commentators to whom I have referred as contending that the whole of the chapter in question relates to the then state of the Jewish nation, and the destruction which was destined to overtake them before that generation passed away, I am surprised to meet with the name of the Rev. Dr. David Brown, of Glasgow. He is regarded, by general consent on the part of the Millenarians, as the ablest opponent of their system whom the present age has produced. But in reference to the passage under consideration his judgment has been grievously at fault, while his anti-Millenarian arguments have been correspondingly weakened. Knowing how much the great majority of Millenarians rest their system on this twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, he seeks to sweep that ground from under their feet by maintaining that it refers exclusively to the destruction which was coming on Jerusalem and the Jews. He would have given a much heavier blow to the Millenarian theory had he

seen and shown that the latter half of the chapter related to the advent of Christ when he shall come as the final Judge of the world. The Rev. Walter Wood—from whose work in favour of the Millennium I have met with Dr. Brown's opinions—obtains on this point an advantage over the latter, because he contends that the chapter refers exclusively to the coming temporal calamities. But apply the words of our Lord to his coming to preside as Judge on the day of final judgment, and they possess a peculiar fitness as well as significance. On that day, as at the time of the Noachian deluge, the righteous will be saved, and the wicked drowned in the unfathomable ocean of the Divine displeasure; while the circumstance of our Lord's coming suddenly, and when least expected, to the general judgment, is in perfect harmony with the other utterances of Scripture regarding the suddenness of his coming for the final judgment of the world.

Equally mistaken do I hold those Millennarians to be who see in the words in question of our Lord, a reference to his coming to our

world to reign personally on the earth. There will be no destruction of the race then, as there was at the time of the flood,—the eight persons already alluded to only being saved. The saints, according to the Millenarian view, who are then alive, will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, but the wicked will remain on the earth, and matters will go on physically in essentially the same way as they did before. *All* the wicked were swept away by Noah's flood, the eight persons saved being the only righteous ones then on the earth; whereas Millenarians, though they speak of judgments befalling the ungodly in the beginning of the Millennium, do not say that they are to be all destroyed. If, indeed, that were to be the case, the world, at the coming of Christ to reign personally on earth, would be depopulated; because, as all the saints are to be caught up in the air to be with their Lord, the earth, so far as human inhabitants are concerned, would become one vast desert.

That the “day and the hour” in which the Son of Man will come, and of which neither Christ himself, as man, nor the angels knew

anything, referred to our Lord's coming at the day of the final judgment of the world, appears to me to be made additionally manifest from what Jesus says in the passage beginning with the forty-second verse and ending with the close of the chapter. "Watch, therefore," says our Lord, in the forty-second verse, "for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." To the same effect, though in different phraseology, is the language of Christ in the forty-fourth verse:—"Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." I cannot discern the most slender reason which Millenarians have for their conviction that the verses in question, or indeed any of the verses, from the forty-second down till the close of the chapter, are confirmatory of their theory of the Second Coming of Christ to reign personally in this world as the head of an earthly kingdom. On the contrary, I cannot, on the Millenarian hypothesis, see any fitness whatever in the words of our Lord. They have evidently all a reference to a period when rewards shall be given to "faithful and wise servants," and

punishments be inflicted on “evil servants.” The former are to be made rulers over all the goods of their Lord, while the latter are to be cut asunder—by the Lord himself be it remembered—and to have their portion with the hypocrites. “There shall,” it is added, “be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” The doom of hypocrites, we know from various parts of the Word of God, is the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; and it is only, we are distinctly informed, on the last day—the day of the final judgment of all mankind—that hypocrites and other sinners, dying in a state of impenitence, and consequently unpardoned, are to be cast into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone. It is, therefore, evident that the verse under consideration has an exclusive reference to the final judgment; and if so, it necessarily follows that, so far as the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew’s Gospel is concerned, the foundations of Millenarianism are completely undermined.

But lest there be some Millenarians who will still cling to the belief that the closing verse of the chapter relates to the providen-

tial judgments with which the ungodly will be visited when Christ comes, as they say, to reign personally on earth, it may be desirable that I should still more fully prove my own view of the passage to be correct, and disprove the accuracy of theirs. This can be triumphantly done by adverting to other parts of the evangelistic records, in which Jesus is set before us as speaking of the final punishment which will be inflicted on the workers of iniquity. In the eleventh and twelfth verses of the eighth chapter of the same Gospel Jesus is described as saying to the Jews whom he addressed on the occasion, "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Now, it will be observed that Christ here speaks of many—no doubt referring to Gentiles as well as Jews—who shall come from the east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the *kingdom of heaven*; that is, with those eternally saved from perdi-

tion, and made the heirs of everlasting glory. "But," adds the Lord, "the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." The "outer darkness" here spoken of must mean the opposite of the kingdom of heaven, where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob now are, and with whom all the saved shall sit down; in other words, the expression is synonymous with the other phrase, "the blackness of darkness for ever," which phrase Millenarians themselves admit to signify the abodes of eternal perdition. It follows, therefore, that the similar phraseology employed by Christ in the closing verse of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew must mean the eternal punishment to which unpardoned sinners will be doomed on the day of final judgment,—not the temporal judgments which Millenarians say will be poured out on the workers of iniquity, when Christ comes to reign on the earth in Millennial glory.

Of the same import is the language, also employed by our Lord, which we find in the eleventh verse of the twenty-second chapter of

the same Gospel. Jesus had previously compared the invitations given to sinners in the Gospel to receive salvation through himself, to invitations given to a wedding feast. The wedding feast was held after the invitations had been all given; and some had accepted, while others had refused them. This appropriately signifies that heaven of perfect and eternal bliss, which will be the abode of all who responded to the Gospel call to be saved, when the present probationary state of existence had come to an end; in other words, the marriage feast here spoken of is virtually the same as the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, of which we read in the Revelation. There is a slight difficulty arising from the fact mentioned, that the man who had not on the wedding-garment—which is the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness—was found among the guests. We know that no unpardoned and unsanctified sinner can ever pass the portals of heaven. But because this incident is not literally the fact, I do not see that it militates against the meaning which I attach to the passage. I regard it as a case not substan-

tially dissimilar to that of the foolish virgins. They had got to the very door of heaven before their true character was discovered; and if the man who had not on the wedding garment is represented as having got inside, it was but for a moment: he was instantly detected and instantly cast out. "Then said the king to his servants," is the language of our Lord, "Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." If those who accepted the invitation to the marriage feast were at the moment when Jesus thus spoke safely and happily placed in heaven, I do not see by what ingenuity it can be questioned, much less denied, that his being bound hand and foot, his being cast into outer darkness, and his being doomed to experience weeping and gnashing of teeth, can mean anything else than the utter and eternal perdition of the man who had not on the wedding garment. It follows, therefore, that the same phraseology employed by Christ at the end of the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew, must also indicate the final doom pronounced by Christ on the

last day on all who lived and died in their sins. Consequently, I repeat once more, that the Millenarians have no ground on which to stand in this part of the Word of God.

I am aware that the popular interpretation of this parable is to the effect that it refers to the Gospel dispensation on earth, and that the invitations given to come to the marriage feast are synonymous with the calls to the unconverted to come and enjoy the privileges possessed by those who have believed in Christ to the saving of their souls. I do not deny the correctness of that interpretation: on the contrary, I fully admit it. But I am no less certain that the interpretation I have given is equally in accordance, if not even more so, with the mind of the Spirit.

Let us now look at the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew in further confirmation of our view of the closing verse of the twenty-fourth chapter. The same expression, "weeping and gnashing of teeth," as the doom of the ungodly, occurs in the thirtieth verse of the twenty-fifth chapter. The passage in which we find it is that of

the parable of our Lord usually called the parable of the talents. The parable begins with the fourteenth verse and ends with the thirtieth. "For the kingdom of heaven," says our Saviour, "is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many

things : enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents : behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant ; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things : enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed : and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth : lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed : thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance : but

from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

It is necessary to quote the whole of the parable in order that it may be seen in all its bearings on the question under consideration. The Millenarians also claim this parable as giving great support to their system. I should have thought that if anything expressed in the language of parable could have evidently referred to the day of final judgment, it would have been the verses which have just been quoted. Jesus Christ himself is the "Lord," and all who possess the means of grace, or the "goods," are the "servants" of that "Lord." He parts with his servants in order that he may go on a journey to a far country, which "far country" is heaven. After "a long time" he returns. Jesus has been already "a long time" in "the far country" to which he has gone. More than eighteen centuries have passed away since, and we know not how long a time it may be yet before he returns. But of this we are certain—that he will return;

and we are no less sure that when he "cometh" it will be to "reckon" with his "servants." Now this word "reckon," if there be any propriety in the place which it occupies in the verse, is synonymous with our Lord's "judging," with a view to rewarding or punishing, the persons to whom he entrusted the talents. Christ sits in judgment on the way in which they have used their privileges during his absence. He institutes a thorough inquiry into their conduct, and having ascertained how they have acquitted themselves, he passes sentence according to the knowledge he possesses. Some are not only acquitted, but warmly approved by their Lord, now invested with judicial functions, and dispensing rewards and punishments in consonance with the manner in which the parties had acted during the period of their probationary state. Every one who had faithfully employed the talents confided to him, no matter whether they were few or many, was not only adequately rewarded, but received expressions of his Lord's approval in the presence of the "unfaithful servants." To the man with the two talents the Lord said, "Well

done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." To "the wicked and slothful servant," the language of the Lord was that of severe and unqualified condemnation, because he had not done as he was commanded to do. And then the Lord closes his reproof in these words: "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

I cannot conceive how any reader of his Bible could put any other construction on this parable than that it relates alone to the day of final judgment. Yet the Millenarians, as already mentioned, maintain that it refers to the coming of Christ a second time to establish a visible kingdom in this world, over which he shall personally preside as sovereign, and that the "faithful servants" who turned their talents to proper account are the saints who will be raised from their graves, or the loving ones who will be instantaneously caught up to meet him in the air. Nothing, surely, could be more far-fetched than this interpretation of the

parable. The whole scene has the aspect of a final judgment. The "faithful servants" were not only admitted, but welcomed into "the joy of their Lord." Now this can mean nothing less than heaven. The words convey the same idea as is expressed by the Psalmist, when, addressing God, he said, "In thy presence"—obviously in heaven—"there is fulness of joy: at thy right hand"—still in heaven—"there are pleasures for evermore." The "joy of the Lord," therefore, into which the "faithful servants" were not only introduced, but welcomed, was heaven, in which all the ransomed sons and daughters of Adam will be supremely and eternally blessed.

No less clear is it that the "outer darkness" into which the "unprofitable servant" was to be cast, and where there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth, meant the abyss of eternal perdition. For if the destiny of the "faithful servants" was everlasting bliss, this fact would involve the moral necessity of the doom of the "wicked and unprofitable servant" being eternal perdition.

If there could be a doubt that the phrase

“outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” meant, as employed by the Lord, to express the fact of the “unprofitable servant” being cast into hell, that doubt would be entirely removed by a reference to the forty-second verse of the thirteenth chapter of the same Gospel, where it is said, after alluding to the gathering out of Christ’s kingdom by the angels, “all things that offend,” meaning the workers of iniquity—that the angels shall “cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” The casting of the wicked into fire invariably means in the New Testament the circumstance of their being consigned to the dungeons of eternal perdition; and, as in the verse just quoted, the words “a furnace of fire”—elsewhere called “unquenchable fire”—are manifestly to be understood as expressing the same idea as “weeping and gnashing of teeth,” the latter words are to be received, where they occur in the twenty-fifth chapter, as signifying eternal punishment to be inflicted at Christ’s Second Coming to the earth; and consequently, as the Millenarians deny that the wicked are to be judged

and doomed to everlasting misery at the Second Advent of Christ, their system derives no support from the passage in question.

As all the words of our Lord, spoken in parables and in predictions in this twenty-fifth chapter, are regarded by Millenarians as proving that he will come again to this world to reign personally on earth, let us first turn to the parable of the ten virgins with which the chapter opens. The parable is so familiar to every reader of the New Testament that it is not necessary to transfer it to our pages. Nothing, to my apprehension, could be more clear than that it refers to the two great classes into which the world is divided, and the probationary state of the present life. The five wise virgins represent the people of God, and the five foolish virgins the unconverted. In the latter are not only included, but specially pointed to, the mere professors of discipleship to Christ. The fact of the wise virgins being received into the marriage chamber when the bridegroom unexpectedly came, is evidently emblematical of the saints being introduced into heaven and welcomed to the joy of their

Lord in the day of judgment. Not less clearly, to my mind, does the shut door, when the foolish virgins present themselves to claim admission to the place in which the marriage ceremony takes place, indicate the awful fact that the wicked will be excluded from heaven on the day on which Christ Jesus will judge the world. I cannot comprehend how the Millenarians can construe this parable in such a way as to make it support their system, because there would be no applicability or point in it if viewed in relation to the advent of Christ to reign personally on earth. It must never be forgotten that one grand, indeed indispensable, part of their hypothesis is, that the workers of iniquity who are in their graves are to remain in the dust of death for a thousand years after the righteous have been raised up, and, consequently, there will be no contemporaneous judgment, according to their creed, of the saints and the workers of iniquity who have died impenitent and unpardoned ; whereas here the righteous and the wicked are judged at the same time ; the former being received into glory, and heaven's door being shut against the latter.

Even more clearly, indeed, I should say demonstrably so, does the third section of this twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew—which remains to be considered—relate to the final judgment. The passage to which I allude begins with the thirty-first and ends with the concluding verses of the chapter. In order that the passage may be seen in its connection, it is necessary that I should quote it, notwithstanding the circumstance of its being somewhat long. “When,” said our Lord, “the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye

clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels : For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me not in : naked, and ye clothed me not : sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of

these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”

I bespeak the special attention of my readers to this portion of New Testament Scripture, because I say advisedly that if the question as to whether Christ's Second Coming to our earth be to reign personally, or to the final judgment, were left in a doubtful state in all other parts of the Bible, the passage I have just quoted would be unmistakably conclusive as to the fact, that it is not to establish a visible kingdom on earth, but to exercise the judicial functions with which God the Father has invested him, and which in their rewards or punishments will be irrevocable. And as the mode in which the passage is introduced—namely, that when the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, and shall then sit on the throne of his glory—is essentially similar to other passages of Scripture in which the coming of Christ is announced—it is clear, according to all the acknowledged rules of analogical reasoning, that if the words I have first alluded to can be proved to relate

to his advent to judge the world, so must those other similar passages which the Millenarians energetically affirm to be decisive as to the truth of their conviction, that they relate to the coming of our Lord to set up a visible throne, and establish a visible kingdom on earth.

In the thirty-second verse we read as follows: "And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats." No language could more clearly state any fact than is the fact stated here, that the righteous and the wicked will all stand together at the judgment day before the bar of Christ. Before him, we are told, shall be gathered *all* nations. And if this be so, the workers of iniquity, of whom there are some—in most instances an appalling majority—in all nations, will be among those who are so gathered. The words, indeed, rightly interpreted, mean the inhabitants of every country. And when all are so gathered, Christ, we are told, "will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats."

It is added in the thirty-third verse that when the process of separation has been completed, our Lord, now sustaining the character of Judge, will set the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Let me here, by way of parenthesis, appeal to my Millenarian readers as believers in Christ who are no less earnestly desirous of knowing the truth than myself, whether these two verses of the twenty-fifth of Matthew can be explained on their idea of the coming of Christ to reign personally on earth? I have seen none of their efforts to reconcile the two verses in question with their Millenarian views, which are deserving of serious refutation. It is so plain to my ideas of the meaning of language that this relates alone to the final judgment of all mankind, that I do not see how it could be made more manifest. Jesus is presented to us as the king seated on his throne of judgment. The sheep [the righteous] are placed, after the process of separation has been completed, on his right hand, while the goats [the wicked] are placed on his left. These two classes embrace the whole world—the “all nations” of the previous

verse. In the mere fact of the separation there is practically the great decision which determines the eternal destiny of both classes. In that very separation, indeed, those belonging to each class know what is to be their eternal fate before their sentence has been formally pronounced. The fact of the righteous being placed by Christ on his right hand is a practical intimation, though not expressed in words, that heaven will be theirs for ever. The fact, on the other hand, of the unrighteous being placed by Christ on his left hand no less explicitly, though silently, intimates to them that their eternal portion is to be the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. But the passing of a formal sentence on both classes will follow the act of their separation from each other. To those on his right hand the King shall say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Then follow the reasons, as given by Christ, why they are thus made the heirs of eternal happiness in heaven. The sentence dooming the wicked to the abodes of eternal perdition is next pronounced upon

them. "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." As in the case of the righteous, Jesus follows up the passing of this sentence by stating the reasons why such an appalling doom has been pronounced upon them.

It will be observed that in announcing to the righteous their glorious destiny Jesus makes use of the words "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." This expression alone would satisfy any mind, not inaccessible to evidence because of preconceived notions, that our Lord could not have had his Second Coming to establish a visible kingdom on earth in his mind, when he made use of the words, but that he must have had in view the transactions connected with the final judgment. We know from Christ's own words that the kingdom prepared from before the foundation of the world is that kingdom of heaven in which Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob already are. The same fact, that the kingdom alluded to by Christ is in heaven, is logically implied by the awful doom pronounced on the ungodly. It is to the lower

regions—the very opposite of heaven—that they are consigned. They are to go away into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. And this view of the blessed destiny of the righteous, and of the terrible doom of the finally impenitent, is further confirmed in the closing verse of the chapter:—“And these,” said Jesus, meaning the wicked, “shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.”

Thus, I repeat, it is proved by reasoning which no unprejudiced mind can resist that the passage in question cannot have been meant by our Lord to relate to his coming personally to earth to reign visibly upon it, but to his coming to discharge the duties incident to his appointment by the Father to be the final Judge of all mankind.

I have adverted at greater length than I would otherwise have done to the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters of Matthew, because, as I have before remarked, they are regarded by the great majority of Millenarians as furnishing more copious and more conclusive evidence in favour of the personal reign of

Christ on earth, than any other portions of Scripture, with the exception of parts of the first and second chapters of the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, and the twentieth chapter of Revelation. I have before referred to the fact that the late Mr. Hewitson, who at one time seemed to consider the twenty-fourth chapter of Matthew as constituting the strongest evidence to be met with in the Word of God, in favour of the Millennium, virtually, on more mature consideration, relinquished that opinion; and not only so, but in effect gave up the chapter altogether as favouring the Millenarian view of Christ coming to reign personally on earth. I may also mention that Dr. Gill, the ablest and most learned of all the Millenarians of the last century, or, indeed, whom the advocates of the personal reign of our Lord can claim as one of their number in any age of the church, was unable to see that the slightest sanction to Millenarianism was given in the twenty-fourth chapter. Like Scott, and various other eminent expositors of the Scriptures, he could see, with one exception, nothing in the chapter which was not meant by Christ to

apply to the calamities which were coming on Jerusalem and Judea. But the one exception alluded to is of great importance. It is to be found in his interpretation of the forty-second verse:—"Watch, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come." After some remarks in consonance with his construction of each of the other verses in the chapter, he says:—"I will not deny but that what follows may be much better accommodated and applied to the Second Coming of Christ and the *last* judgment." And so with regard to the twenty-fifth chapter. This eminent Millenarian divine expounds all the passages which modern Millenarians interpret as applicable only to the Second Advent of our Lord to establish a visible kingdom on earth, as meant by Christ solely to apply to his coming at the last day in the character of the final Judge of all mankind. I may mention also that the translators of our version of the New Testament regarded the two chapters in question as referring only to the day of judgment in those parts which the Millenarians of the present day maintain to be applicable

only to our Lord's coming to reign in person on the earth. Any one who looks at the headings they gave their several chapters will be satisfied on this point. These, it will be seen, exactly accord with the interpretation which I have given to the two chapters. I may, it is true, be told that these are only the opinions of men, and are only to be taken at what they are worth. I acquiesce in the justice of the observation. But let us, at least, take their opinions on this point at what they *are* worth. I ask no more. But I do submit that no mere human opinion is worth more than theirs on a matter of this kind. The translators of our version of the Scriptures appointed in 1604 by King James were fifty-four in number, and they were the most eminent Biblical scholars in the land. That is conceded on all hands. As the great task of translation was not entered on until 1607, several of those appointed to the work must either have died, or become, through illness, or other causes, unfit for the duties to which they were appointed: because we know that only forty-seven were engaged in the execution of the task. Now if these

forty-seven divines were deemed the fittest for the work of all the best Biblical scholars in the land; if, too, as we know was the case, they were men no less eminent for their piety than their learning,—men taught by the Spirit of God, as well as endowed with intellectual gifts of no common order; if they took three years to specially prepare themselves for the duties they were appointed to perform; and if they devoted—as we know they did—all their powers of mind, and all their great and varied stores of learning for the long period of six years, to the important task which had been confided to them,—surely their opinions are at least entitled to every consideration on the part of Millenarians, as well as of all other persons, whatever their views on particular points, who reverentially receive the Bible as a special revelation from God to man.

As in the case of the twenty-fourth chapter, I have thought it right thus to go at considerable length into the bearings of this twenty-fifth chapter on the Second Coming of Christ on the Millenarian question, because the advocates of the personal reign of our Lord on earth

lay so much stress upon it. Those who wish to see this and the preceding chapter examined ably and fully in accordance with Millenarian views, I would recommend to read Mr. Benjamin Wills Newton's "Lecture on the Prophecies of the Lord Jesus, as contained in Matthew xxiv and xxv." In replying to the remarks of Dr. Tregelles, on the twenty-fourth chapter, I have, in effect, replied to some of the arguments of Mr. Newton, because there is a complete, or as nearly as may be a complete, accordance of opinion between these two Millenarian writers on the chapters in question,—as indeed there is on the subject of prophecy generally.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST—HIS OWN
WORDS ON THE SUBJECT. (*Concluded.*)

THERE is another parable of our Lord on which modern Millenarians likewise lay great stress, as confirmatory of their views respecting his personal coming to reign on and over the earth for a thousand years. I am not sure, indeed, whether the majority of their number do not regard the parable to which I allude as being more favourable to their views than any of the parables through the medium of which Christ spoke to his disciples when on earth. At any rate, I am sure of this—that none of his parables are more frequently quoted, either in the pulpit or from the Millenarian press, than the one in question. The parable to which I refer is the one recorded in the nineteenth chapter, and from the eleventh verse to the

twenty-seventh of the Gospel by Luke:—
“And as they heard these things,” the evangelist says, Christ “added and spake a parable, because he was nigh to Jerusalem, and because they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear. He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come. But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us. And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds. And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds. And he said like-

wise to him, Be thou also over five cities. And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow. And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury? And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. (And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.) For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him. But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."

This parable is in some respects the same

as that recorded in the twenty-fifth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew; but as there are some important points in the parable given in Luke, which are not found in the record which Matthew gives of it, I have thought it better to advert to it alone; instead of having done so, when I adverted to the parable in the twenty-fifth of Matthew.

I have spoken of the use which modern Millenarian writers as well as preachers make of this parable in support of their theory of the personal reign of Christ. I do not know of any author who has more zealously, or at greater length pressed this portion of Scripture into the Millenarian service than the Rev. J. C. Ryle, late of Bedmingham, Suffolk, but now Vicar of Stradbroke, in the same county. Under the title of "Occupy till I Come," he has, in a small pamphlet, devoted thirty pages to it. He regards the entire parable as relating to the Second Coming of Christ to reign on earth a thousand years, and to that alone. We shall be better able to comprehend the scope of the parable if we first of all advert to the reasons which Luke alleges for our Lord

having spoken it. They are to be found in the eleventh verse:—"He," we are told, "spake a parable because he was nigh unto Jerusalem, and because they (the disciples) thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." I have not any definite notion as to why Christ spake this parable, because the disciples were near to Jerusalem. It may have been that he had recurred in his conversation with them to what he had previously said about the calamities which were destined to come upon that city before the then existing generation had passed away; and that the subject of Jerusalem's approaching destruction naturally led to his removing the erroneous impression which had taken hold of their minds, that he was about to erect a temporal kingdom in Judea. At all events we are sure of this, because we have our Lord's own explicit words for it, that one great object of the parable was to dispel the delusion that Christ was about to set up a glorious temporal kingdom in the world, the chief seat of which should be Jerusalem. Luke distinctly testifies to this:—"Because," says that evan-

gelist, "they thought that the kingdom of God should immediately appear." Mr. Ryle treats this reason for our Lord's speaking the parable in question, as if the disciples had expected the Lord to come at once to reign personally on earth in Millennial glory; but there could not be a greater mistake as to the meaning of the words. It is, indeed, so manifestly a groundless interpretation of them, that it is truly astonishing that such a man as Mr. Ryle, or any other enlightened expositor of Scripture, could have fallen into the error. It is as plain as anything could be, that in relation to the true character of Christ's kingdom on earth, his disciples were in as great mental darkness as they were on many other important points. Their notions as to the establishment of a worldly kingdom by Christ, were evidently of the same kind as those of the Jews as a nation. They, it is known to all, expected that Messiah should come to their land to rescue them from the Roman yoke, and to reign as an earthly Prince in Jerusalem, and over all Judea. That the disciples of Christ, even after they had been

a long time with him, shared these views, is placed beyond all doubt by the fact, that on one memorable occasion the mother of two of their number, James and John, applied to him for the two chief seats of honour for her sons when he should establish his temporal kingdom in great power and splendour on earth. And this they believed he would immediately do. But, indeed, everything which is recorded in the Evangelists respecting the views of Christ's disciples clearly shows that the mere fact of their following him as their Lord and Master did not rid them of those Jewish principles and predilections which had been instilled into their minds as the children of Israel. More than this; long after the death of Christ, Jewish prejudices still operated powerfully on the minds of the disciples of Christ, as may be inferred from the great pains at which Paul was, in several of his epistles, to extirpate those principles and prepossessions from their minds.

It is all the more extraordinary that Mr. Ryle should represent the first disciples of Christ as having clear perceptions of his

Millennial glory during his thousand years' visible reign on earth, when we find him in the very same breath representing them as being ignorant of the fact that Christ was to suffer and die. "They grasped," says Mr. Ryle, "part of the prophetic words, but not all. They saw that Christ was to have a kingdom, but they did not see he was to be wounded, and bruised, and be an offering for sin. They understood the dispensation of the crown and the glory, but not the cross and the shame. That was their mistake."

Mr. Ryle is altogether wrong when he represents the first disciples of Christ as having accurate views of Millennial glory. There is not a single word in the Evangelists which gives the slightest sanction to the idea that they were Millenarians. So far from this being the fact, they appeared one and all to share the views of the two disciples who met the risen Saviour when they were on their way to Emmaus. They *had* thought, but did not *now* think, that it "should have been he who should have redeemed Israel." All their hopes were gone. Those hopes were buried with

Jesus when he was laid in his grave. They had not the slightest idea that he would rise again from the dead until he showed them from the Scriptures that he must do so. It was the same with those who went to visit his grave. The two Marys did not go to his sepulchre in the hope or with the expectation that he should rise again. They went, we are told, that they might anoint his body with "the sweet spices," which they had brought for the purpose. So also in relation to the two disciples to whom he appeared after he had risen from his grave. Their testimony to the fact of their having seen him was not credited by "the residue." And when Jesus, as we are further informed, afterwards appeared unto the eleven apostles, he "upbraided them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them who had seen him, after he was risen." This disbelief in the resurrection of Christ, on the part of his disciples, was still more marked and more unreasonable in the case of Thomas. He not only would not credit the testimony of even the eleven, all of whom emphatically assured him that their Lord had

appeared unto them, but he would not receive any evidence, however great in amount and decisive in its nature, short of seeing Christ himself, and thrusting his hands into the wounds of his Lord. Now, as no one could believe in the personal reign of Christ on earth, who did not believe in his resurrection from the dead, it necessarily follows with a logical precision which no one can question, that inasmuch as the first disciples of Christ did not believe in his resurrection from the dead, they could not, as Mr. Ryle, and others who share his views, so confidently assert, have been Millenarians, or believers in the coming of Christ at some future time to establish a visible kingdom in transcendent glory on earth. Such an idea never entered their minds. But on this point Mr. Ryle is strangely inconsistent with himself. A little further on in his small publication he admits that the disciples "even after the crucifixion" clung partially to the mistaken notion that Christ would establish a temporal kingdom in power and great glory on the earth ; but this—and Mr. Ryle should have stated the fact more explicitly

than he does—was not until *after* all the disciples were perfectly satisfied as to the resurrection of their Lord from the dead. The disciples said, remarks Mr. Ryle, addressing Jesus, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” Nothing could be more clear than that those of Christ’s disciples who put this question to him, had in their minds a purely temporal or secular kingdom. The very wording of the question is decisive on that point. It was to “*Israel*” only—that is, to the Jews alone—that they sought to see the restoration of the kingdom. But in addition to this, there is the important phrase, “at *this* time.” What then could be more clear than that it was to an immediate and temporal kingdom, and not to a Millennial kingdom many centuries distant, that this question of the disciples to their Lord referred? No amount of ingenuity could make out even the semblance of a case in favour of the views that the disciples had a Millennial kingdom in their eyes when they put this question to their Lord, when we further consider the fact that it was to the restoration, not the establishment for the

first time of a kingdom, that they alluded. Nothing can be restored that did not formerly exist; and as there never had been in the previous ages of the world any Millennial kingdom, no such kingdom could be restored, and consequently could not have been in the minds of the disciples when they put the question under consideration to their Lord. But there had been a Jewish kingdom before, under the sovereignty of David and Solomon and others, when the Jews were a great nation, and especially favoured by God. So then it appears as clear as the noonday sun, that it was to the restoration of this kingdom and that alone that the question alluded to was put to the Lord by his disciples. And this Jewish notion, as every one who is acquainted with any of the intelligent descendants of Abraham must be aware, is still fondly cherished by them. Dr. Lightfoot puts the matter in these words:—
 “Restore again the kingdom. Wilt thou—as if the disciples had said—‘break the Roman yoke from off our necks, and immediately erect the kingdom of the Messiah?’”
 “This notion of a temporal kingdom of the

Messiah," adds Dr. Lightfoot, "was, and is to this day, the great delusion of the Jewish nation."

Not only do all the most eminent commentators on the Scriptures take this view of this particular passage, but even those great and good men—Dr. Gill and Benjamin Keach, both of them as strenuous Millenarians as Mr. Ryle himself, though differing from him on many points—entirely concur in this interpretation of the passage in question. Mr. Ryle is evidently disconcerted at the fact that all our commentators—at least, so far as I am aware—should be at variance with him here. It can only be on that supposition that he says, "It is high time to lay aside traditional methods of interpretation, and to give up our blind obedience to the opinions of such writers as Poole, Henry, Scott, and Clarke, upon unfulfilled prophecy." Surely, in thus referring to these eminent expositors of the Word of God—men to whose lives and labours the Church of Christ owes a debt of gratitude too large to be ever repaid—it would only have been what might have been expected from so

excellent a man as Mr. Ryle, that he should have had a kind word or two to say in the way of recognition of the invaluable services which have been rendered by the writers to the cause of evangelical truth.

But let us now return to the parable recorded in the nineteenth chapter of Luke. The "certain nobleman," just before starting on his journey to a far country, where he was to receive a kingdom and then return, called all his servants together, and confided to them certain talents, which they were to use in his absence. The talents so confided to them, and the purpose to which they were to be turned, are all included in the words "Occupy till I come." Mr. Thomas Hartwell Horne is of opinion that the allusion which Christ here makes to the nobleman's going into a far country to receive a kingdom, was grounded on the fact of Archelaus, the son and successor of Herod the Great, going to Rome to receive a provincial kingdom. Mr. Birks is of the same opinion as Mr. Hartwell Horne ; but be that as it may, it appears to me that there cannot be the slightest uncertainty as to the great truth

which the parable is intended to teach. It undoubtedly points to Christ, and to those who live under the Gospel dispensation. Christ is the nobleman, and we all are the servants whom he has placed in positions of trust and responsibility. In due course of time the nobleman returns, and calls all his servants to see in what way they had employed the talents confided to them during his absence. With the results of this meeting between the nobleman and his servants, every reader of this volume is acquainted, and, therefore, I need not go into details on that point. Millenarians maintain that the return of the nobleman from the far country into which he went, is emblematical of Christ having gone to heaven, after he had accomplished his mission on earth, and of his return to reign personally in our world immediately preceding the commencement of the Millennium. I know of no modern Millenarian who does not regard this parable as one of the principal supports of his system. On the other hand, I do not know a single passage in the New Testament, quoted by Millenarians in confirmation of their views, which gives less of

even a seeming sanction to the theory of the personal reign of Christ. Two expressions in the parable, if carefully considered, will suffice to subvert the Millenarian hypothesis so far as it is founded on this passage. The nobleman, we are told, went into the far country to *receive* a kingdom. He *did* receive it, and having done so, returned to reckon with his servants in relation to the way in which they had acted during his absence. Now, it is an essential part of the Millenarian system that Christ is only to receive his kingdom when he comes to reign personally on earth. On this point, however much Millenarians may differ among themselves on other matters, they are all agreed. The parable, therefore, in this part of it, is wholly subversive of their scheme. It states in the most explicit language that not only did the nobleman go to the far country to receive a kingdom, and to return, but that, as I have just said, he *did* receive it, and having received it, returned. Is it not, then, more than surprising that Millenarians, who maintain that Christ will not receive his kingdom until he comes to reign personally on earth, should

reason themselves into the belief that this parable is confirmatory of their views?

But while I hold that this part of the parable entirely of itself overthrows the Millenarian scheme, the account which follows of the reckoning of the nobleman with his servants, is no less incompatible with Millenarianism. What is said of this reckoning can only be made reconcilable with the idea of Christ being represented by it as fulfilling the functions of a final Judge at the last day. The faithful servants are approved and rewarded; while the unfaithful servants are condemned and punished. The doom of the latter is pronounced in these awful words:—"Those, mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them bring hither and slay them before me." This language is only intelligible on the assumption that the transactions recorded are intended to show forth what will take place on the day of the general judgment. The enemies of Christ are not simply to receive *some* measure of temporary punishment, but their punishment is to be full and final. They are to be slain before Christ. This is the same as the second death,

which, we are elsewhere told, takes place on the day in which Christ shall judge the world. The language of our Lord in the verse I have last quoted, is synonymous with that which he is elsewhere represented as addressing to the wicked—"Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;" or with those other words of Christ in which he says, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

In connection with the command of Christ—a command given to the holy angels to execute—to bring hither his enemies and slay them before him, there is yet another consideration which entirely overthrows the Millenarian hypothesis, so far as it claims support from the parable in question. I have shown—or rather, indeed, the fact is so patent on the face of the parable itself, that no one can fail to perceive it—that the reward of the faithful and the punishment of the unfaithful servants were simultaneous. Now this is at utter variance with one of the most vital parts of the Millenarian system. All the wicked from the be-

ginning of the world, who are in their graves, when Christ comes, according to the Millenarian view of his Second Advent, will remain in their graves for a thousand years ; so that it could not be predicated of them that they should be brought out and slain before Christ, contemporaneously with the bestowment of the reward on the faithful servants. It is, therefore, I maintain, an entirely groundless assumption to regard this parable as supporting Millenarian views. It can only apply to the transactions of the day of final judgment ; and to those transactions it does most strikingly apply.

I have dwelt at considerable length on this parable, because, as before remarked, the Millenarians attach so great an importance to it. Many of them, indeed, carry their views so far with relation to the passage, that they would, I am persuaded, be prepared to adhere to their Millenarianism, even if it could be proved to their satisfaction that some of the other passages of Scripture which they quote in support of their system, afford the slightest support to that system. And yet, as I trust I have made sufficiently clear, the parable in

question has no reference whatever to Millenarian views.

Another parable of our Lord which the Millenarians refer to with the greatest confidence as confirmatory of their notions, is that of the wheat and the tares. This parable is recorded in the thirteenth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew. It is so familiar to all readers of the Scriptures, that I need not transfer it into these pages. The verses begin with the thirty-eighth and end with the forty-third. After speaking of himself as the sower of the good seed, he proceeds to say that the field is the world, that the good seed are the children of the kingdom, that the tares are the children of the wicked one, that the enemy that sowed "the tares" is the devil, that the harvest is the end of the world, and that the reapers are the angels. Jesus then adds that at the harvest, or the end of the world, the tares are gathered and burned in the fire. The mission of the angels is, we are told in the forty-first and forty-second verses, to gather out of Christ's kingdom all things that offend and them that do iniquity, and then to cast

them into a furnace of fire, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. “Then,” it is added, “shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.”

Most modern Millenarians quote this passage of Scripture as furnishing conclusive proof of the truth of their theory of the personal reign of Christ. Mr. T. R. Birks, in his “*Outlines of Unfulfilled Prophecy*,” is less confident in what he says in reference to its bearings in favour of Millenarianism. “These words,” he says, “are not so explicit as some other passages.” It is true he somewhat qualifies this by the following sentence:—“Still, the return of our Lord is clearly implied.” If Mr. Birks meant that the passage proves clearly that Christ will return to judge the world at THE END OF ALL THINGS, we would entirely concur with him. But his meaning is that the passage “clearly implies” that our Lord will return to reign personally on earth. Viewing the Second Advent of Christ in that sense, we are constrained to adopt Mr. Birks’s first words, “that the words are not so explicit.” So far indeed from this, they are “explicit” the opposite

way. They are "explicit" in pointing out and proving the great fact that Christ's Second Coming will be for the purpose of finally judging all mankind. The tares, or the wicked, are to be separated from the wheat, or the righteous. The former are to be cast into "the furnace of fire," which undoubtedly denotes the regions of eternal despair. The expression is synonymous with those other expressions which occur again and again in the Gospels, "unquenchable fire," and "the fire that is not quenched." And these last expressions are, so far as I am aware, universally admitted by evangelical Christians to mean eternal punishment. Now, no Millenarians, so far as I know, hold the opinion that Christ will, at what they call his Second Advent to reign personally on the earth, consign the wicked to that unquenchable fire which burns and blazes in the abodes of eternal perdition. Such an opinion would indeed be incompatible with the Millenarian system; for, as I have on several occasions already remarked, the bodies of the wicked are all, without exception, to remain in their graves for at least a thousand

years after Christ has come. The expression, therefore, "the furnace of fire," into which the tares were by Christ's command to be cast, being convertible with that of "the fire that is not quenched," the eternity of the fire being made still more manifest by the words, "the worm that dieth not," which precede,—prove beyond the possibility of a reasonable doubt that the parable of the wheat and the tares refers to the day of general judgment, and not to the Millennial advent of our Lord.

I might have further alluded, in confirmation of this view of the meaning of our Lord when he uttered the words in question, to the sentence which follows :—"There shall," added our Saviour, "be wailing and gnashing of teeth." I have shown, in adverting to other passages in the evangelistic records in which our Lord employs this phraseology, that he has the eternal punishment of "them which do iniquity" in view, when he so expresses himself; and therefore I maintain that, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, Christ meant the same thing in the parable of the wheat and the tares.

Even yet further confirmation of my firm belief that our Lord in this passage referred to the transactions of the day of judgment, and not to his personal advent to set up a visible kingdom in this world, is afforded by what he said respecting the state and destiny of the righteous, or the wheat. "Then," he says, "shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father." I attach great importance to these concluding words of our Lord. No attentive reader of the New Testament can fail to have noticed, when the kingdom of God or of the Father is spoken of in the Scriptures, it almost invariably refers to heaven, in which God the Father is said to have specially set his throne, as being the central spot in which, in a special manner, he manifests his glory. Christ's kingdom, it will be observed, is not spoken of here, whereas the Millenarians invariably connect the immediate establishment of Christ's kingdom on earth with his Millennial advent. Here it is said that it is to be in the kingdom of their Father that the righteous are to shine forth as the sun, immediately after the tares, or the

workers of iniquity, have had their appalling doom assigned to them. According to the Millenarian theory the order of things is to be reversed. Instead of the wicked being first cast into "the furnace of fire," and then the wheat, or the righteous, shining as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, the righteous who are in their graves are to be raised in glorified bodies, and the saints, who are to be alive, are to be caught up also in a glorified state to meet their Lord in the air, and to concur with and assist him in pouring out the most dreadful judgments on the ungodly.

But there is another point which demands our attention in connection with this parable of our Lord. In the forty-first verse it is stated that the angels shall gather out of his kingdom "all things that offend and them which do iniquity." The construction which is to be put on this passage is so plain as not to admit of a second rendering. It is, that every worker of iniquity, every wicked person, shall be taken or cast out of Christ's kingdom on earth, which necessarily involves the fact that all such shall be excluded from the kingdom

of Christ in heaven. Now, no Millenarian, so far as my acquaintance extends with Millenarians personally, or with their writings, supposes that there will not be ungodly persons on the earth during, as they allege, the reign of Christ upon it. All believers in the personal reign of Christ admit that sin will still exist during the whole of the Millennial period, though it will be much less prevalent than it ever was since the fall of our first parents. The fact, then, is as clear as demonstration itself, that Christ could not have had in his mind, when he spoke these words, the idea of a personal reign or visible kingdom on the earth; for his words are as explicit as he could make them, that *all* things that offend and them who do iniquity shall be gathered out of his kingdom. Millenarians maintain, as being, indeed, the very soul of their system, that Christ has, properly speaking, no kingdom on earth now, nor ever will have until he comes in person, a second time, to reign visibly in the world. I know of no language which could more effectually prove the groundlessness of that belief than the words of our Lord when he

says that he will send his angels to gather out of his kingdom all things that offend and them who do iniquity ; for how could he gather the godless out of his kingdom if he had no kingdom at all ?

Such are the inconsistencies, such the reversal of the order of things at Christ's coming, which the Millenarian system inevitably involves.

In the same thirteenth chapter of Matthew, which contains the parable of the tares and the wheat, another parable of our Lord is recorded. It is that which is generally designated the parable of the Gospel net. The Millenarians also appropriate this parable to themselves. They regard it as confirmatory, in a high degree, of their theory of the personal reign of Christ on the earth. They go even further than this : they are surprised that any one should differ from their views on this point. As the parable is short, it will be right to give it in full. It begins with the forty-seventh verse and ends with the fiftieth. "Again," said our Lord, "the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into

the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

It has been reserved for our modern Millenarians to find support for their system in this passage of Scripture. The Millenarians of previous periods did not, so far as I am acquainted with the Millenarianism of a former day, ever refer to this portion of evangelistic truth as furnishing an argument in support of their creed. I will not here make an observation which some persons will say would be abundantly justified by the fact—namely, that Millenarianism must be reduced to hard straits before it could bring itself to seek for support in the passage in question. If any anti-Millenarian were to wish his belief to be expressed that the passage alludes only to the coming of Christ to judge the world finally and eternally, I do not see what plainer language

he could desire to be employed than is furnished here. The net which had been cast into the sea, and drawn full of fish to the shore, is the Gospel which is preached to all who, in Divine Providence, are within its sound. "The end of the world" is but another expression of similar import with that of "the close of the Gospel dispensation." The sitting down and the gathering of the good fish into vessels, but casting the bad away, illustrates what shall occur on the day of the general judgment. The severance which is to take place between the wicked and the just, through the instrumentality of angels, is clearly a final and eternal severance; for we are told that the angels are to cast the wicked into a furnace of fire, where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Here it will be observed that the wicked are to be first disposed of by being cast into the furnace of fire, where there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Now, this fact is at entire variance with the Millenarian hypothesis; for that system, as I have had occasion again and again to remark, is based on this among other assumptions, that

their bodies are to remain in their graves after the Second Advent of Christ for a period of a thousand years before they shall be called to receive any punishment at all. But I feel assured I need not add another word to satisfy all who are free from the influences which a preconceived system never fails to exercise on the mind, that this passage of Scripture, so far from favouring Millenarianism, lays the axe at the root of that view of what the nature of the future kingdom of our Lord is to be.

Coming to the Gospel of "the disciple whom Jesus loved," and to whom our Lord made such marvellous manifestations when a living martyr in Patmos to his devotion to the cause of his Master,—we do not find so many passages containing the words of Christ which the Millenarians adduce in support of their views as we meet with in the writings of the other three Evangelists. To one passage, which relates to the resurrection, I shall have occasion to advert when I come to examine the views of the Millenarians with regard to what they call the two resurrections. As respects the Second Coming of our Lord, the

advocates of his advent as preliminary to his reigning personally on earth for a thousand years, the only portions of John's Gospel which they quote in favour of their views, will be found in the fourteenth chapter. In the second and third verses of the chapter, Jesus thus speaks to his disciples:—"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Those who are unacquainted with the facility which Millenarians display at claiming passages of Scripture in support of their views, will be somewhat surprised to find that they should discover Millenarianism in the two verses in question. And yet I know not any Millenarian author of note who does not quote those verses as furnishing strong collateral proof of the coming of Christ to reign in person on this earth. Now, so far from being able to discern even the semblance of an argument in favour of their view in the passage

in question, I regard it as furnishing evidence of the groundlessness of their faith in the personal reign of Christ. Jesus tells us, as he told his disciples, that when he should leave our world it would be to go to prepare a place for all his followers. Now, whither did Jesus go? That question the simplest-minded child could satisfactorily answer. He went to heaven. Luke, in the close of the concluding chapter of his Gospel, says that, while Jesus was in the act of blessing his disciples, "he was parted from them, and *carried up into heaven.*" In the tenth and eleventh verses of the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we have further testimony to the same effect. "And while," it is said, "they," meaning the apostles, "looked stedfastly towards heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel : which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven."

In these two verses it will be observed, that the fact of Christ going up into heaven when

he left our world, is stated in the most explicit manner. It is demonstrably clear, therefore, that when Christ speaks of the "many mansions" that are in his "Father's house," and of "the place" which he had gone to prepare for his followers, he means heaven in the literal or popular acceptation of the word. Heaven, therefore, is to be the ultimate and eternal abode of all Christ's disciples. This would have been conclusively manifest, even had our Lord said nothing more on the subject. But we have further confirmatory evidence of the fact in what follows:—"And if," adds our Lord, "I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also." The place which Christ was to prepare was in the locality to which he went when he quitted our world, namely, the heaven to which he was then seen to ascend. And it is no less evident, that when he says, "I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also," he means, that when he again comes to our world it will be, not as the Millenarians say, to

remain with them on the earth, but to receive them to himself, that they may be where he is. Now, we know, not only that Christ went to heaven when he left our earth, but that he still remains in heaven, and is unceasingly occupied in preparing mansions there for all who believe upon him. It were contrary to all those recognised rules in accordance with which we construe language to interpret Christ's words "where I am," knowing, as we do, that he is in heaven, in such a way as if they were synonymous with his coming to reign personally on earth. If, indeed, the doctrine of the Second Advent of Jesus to remain in and rule over our world for a thousand years, were in accordance with the testimony of Scripture, Christ would have more fitly expressed himself had he said, instead of "*I go to prepare a place for you,*" "*I come to prepare a place for you.*" It only, therefore, shows to what an extent the plainest language of Scripture may be misinterpreted where the human mind, even in the case of the best of men, has become strongly wedded to a certain theological system. I am sure there

will not be found a single one among my Millenarian readers, however many they may be, who will not say that he understood the expression of our Lord, “*I go to prepare a place for you,*” as meaning that he is to *come* to prepare a place for his people, until long after he had got entangled in the meshes of Millenarianism.

Such are the only passages in the Gospel of John which the Millenarians contend are directly in favour of their views. Some of their leading authors are disappointed at the little support which their theory of the personal reign of Christ receives from this Gospel ; but they console themselves for this by the fact, that, as they believe, the beloved disciple gives ample and conclusive confirmation to their views in his Apocalypse. “*There are,*” says Mr. Birks, “fewer direct allusions to our Lord’s return in this than in the other Gospels. The reason,” he adds, “may be, that the hope of the Church is so fully unfolded in the prophecies of which this evangelist was the chosen messenger.” This is convenient assumption, but nothing more.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST—PASSAGES
FROM THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES
RELATING TO THE QUESTION.

WE now come to the *Acts* of the Apostles with the view of seeing what that portion of Scripture says respecting the Second Coming of Christ. In the Acts the references to the Second Advent of our Lord are neither many in number nor explicit in their nature. The first is in the opening chapter. The allusion to the return of our Lord to earth will be found in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh verses. “And when,” it is said, “he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked stedfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also

said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." It is the latter clause of the last-quoted verse which Millenarians cite with an air of triumph as if it constituted a complete and final decision in their favour in relation to the points at issue between them and us. Now what is decided by the words—"This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven?" Any one who can discover Millenarianism here, even in its most modified form, must certainly possess surpassing powers of discernment. Assuredly no ordinary reader of his Bible, no believer in Christ *before* he became a Millenarian, ever yet discovered in the words we have quoted, anything which could be construed into a sanction of that part of the Millenarian system which relates to the advent of Christ to reign personally on the earth. It is simply stated that as the disciples saw Jesus ascend into heaven, so, with no less certainty, shall they see him, in

God's appointed time, coming down from heaven. We have only here the mere fact that Christ will come again from heaven in the same bodily form to this earth as that in which he was, on this occasion, seen to ascend from our world to that heaven in which he had dwelt from all eternity before he came to our earth.

The only other direct reference in the Acts to the Second Advent of our Lord to which I will advert, because it is the only other passage to which Millenarians attach importance as being assumed to sanction their system, is that which will be found in the twentieth and twenty-first verses of the third chapter. "He shall," says Peter, as his words are here recorded, "send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began." Now here again I cannot help wondering that the Millenarians could put such a construction on the words which I have quoted, as to make them prove the truth of their theory regarding

the personal reign of Christ on earth. There is one consideration connected with the passage which seems to me to be completely at variance with their views ; and not only so, but to establish the conviction which anti-Millenarians maintain, that Christ will not revisit our world until he comes to it on the day of final judgment. It is distinctly stated that Christ will remain in heaven until the times of the restitution of all things. The word “restitution,” as here employed, is allowed by all our ablest commentators, and I believe by Millenarians themselves, to signify restoration. Now the restoration spoken of in this passage under the term “restitution,” manifestly means the restoration of the saved portions of mankind to that perfect state in which our first parents were when they came from the hands of God, and in which they continued until they listened to the voice of the tempter and partook of the forbidden fruit. The commentary which Bishop Newcome, who was a Millenarian in a modified sense, makes on the phrase “restitution of all things,” is, so far as I am aware, universally accepted by expositors of the Word of God. It

is this :—"When all things shall be disposed, ordered, settled in a *perfect* state." Now so far as I am conversant with Millenarian literature—and I have scrupulously sought to make myself acquainted with the most popular Millenarian works—no Millenarian goes so far, however exalted his conception may be of the Millennial glory which he believes the world is destined to witness, as to affirm, that during the thousand years' personal reign of Christ on the earth, human nature will be perfect in the same sense as the nature of our first parents was, or that the entire globe which we inhabit will undergo so mighty and marvellous a transformation as to vie, from pole to pole, or wherever it is peopled, with the state of the Garden of Eden before its transcendent beauty had been marred by the entrance of sin. I shall hereafter prove, with a conclusiveness which I hope will carry conviction to the minds of all who may read what I shall say, that there will be much of sin and of consequent suffering and sorrow in the Millennial state,—in which state we anti-Millenarians do, in a sense, as firmly believe as do our

Millenarian opponents. The great difference between us is, that we expect the measure of Millennial glory and bliss which the world is destined to witness and enjoy, from the prevalence of Christian principles, as the result of an abundant effusion of the Holy Spirit's influences; while they expect the glory and happiness of the Millennial period of the earth's history as the result of the personal presence and dominion of our common Lord. But this is not the proper place to enter at any length into that aspect of the question. The fitting time for doing so will be when I come to treat of the "Millennial State of the Earth."

In the mean time I confine myself to the words of Peter, as recorded in the verse of the Acts under consideration. If then, I repeat, there will be no "restitution of *all* things," no restoration to a perfect state of human nature, nor to the paradisiacal condition of Eden before the fall of our first parents, during the Millennial period, and if Christ is to remain in the heavens until the restitution of *all* things, it follows, as a logical necessity, that our Lord cannot personally return, either

before or during the Millennial period of the earth's history,—sin still existing in our world, and that woe which is inseparably associated with sin. But there will be “the restitution of *all* things” when Christ comes to judge the world at the last day, and when he will take back to heaven with him all those whom he hath redeemed with his blood, in that blissful and perfect state in which they shall be when their vile bodies, raised from the dust of death, shall be made like unto his glorious body, and be for ever reunited to the souls with which they were connected during their sojourn on earth. To this effect is the language of the eminent expositor Poole. In his commentary on the passage in question he says:—“The end of the world will be the time of the restitution of all things, with man especially, who shall then be restored into the image of God and a blessed immortality.”

The passages to which I have adverted are the only two in the Acts on which Millenarians, as a body, set great store as confirmatory of their views respecting a pre-Millennial advent. Some few Millenarians are, however, to be met

with who press into their service another passage in the second chapter of that book. The passage consists of the nineteenth and twentieth verses. "And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come."

Mr. T. R. Birks, to whose Millenarian writings I have again and again already referred, is one of those authors who imagine they see the Second Coming of Christ to reign personally on earth in the above passage. I cannot help saying here, as I have said before in relation to other parts of Scripture maintained by Millenarians to be in favour of their system, that I am surprised at the manifest misconceptions of the meaning of Scripture which can be made by those who are unduly wedded to some particular system. My full persuasion is, and in my belief I am borne out by nearly all our most approved expositors of Scripture, that the reference in the passage is to the approaching destruction of Jerusalem and the awful cala-

mities concomitant with, or consequent on, that unparalleled catastrophe. I think that there is very strong presumptive evidence in favour of this view, from what is said in the twenty-first verse. "And," adds the inspired penman, "it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." The Christians being a praying people, would of necessity call on the name of the Lord that they might escape the appalling judgments that were coming on Jerusalem, and of which they were so well forewarned by himself. Matthew Henry says that, in accordance with the promise that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved, not a single Christian suffered death during the terrible judgments which God inflicted on Jerusalem. But whether the opinion that the passage we have quoted referred to the destruction of Jerusalem be correct or otherwise, it cannot, by any amount of ingenuity, be so construed as to sanction even seemingly the notion that it referred to the coming of Christ to reign personally on earth. No one will, at the supposed Millenarian advent of our Lord,

call upon him in the sense which is indicated in the passage in question. The righteous will not need so to call on Christ, and the wicked will not then be heard and saved even if they did call on him. He will, according to the universal belief of Millenarians, come to take vengeance on the ungodly, not to hear and answer their prayers. I repeat, therefore, that the passage under consideration furnishes no evidence in support of Millenarianism. On the contrary, it proves that so far as its testimony is concerned, Millenarianism has not the shadow of a foundation on which to rest.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST—WHAT THE
EPISTLES SAY OF THE EVENT.

THE *Epistles* respecting the Second Coming of Christ next claim our attention. Millenarians do not say that their views receive either any great amount, or any very decided support, in the Epistle to the Romans. They only point to four portions of that epistle which they regard as sanctioning their hypothesis. The first portion is in the twelfth and sixteenth verses of the second chapter. "For as many," says Paul, "as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel." These two

verses so evidently refer to the coming of Christ to judgment, that it might be supposed there could not be found an intelligent Millenarian, much less any one taught by the Spirit of God, who could—no matter how great his ingenuity or his anxiety to support his system—have found an argument in its favour in the passage in question. According to the Millenarian view, there will be no judging of sinners in the judicial sense of the word, when Christ shall come again. All unconverted sinners shall on “the day” indicated in this passage be judged without law where they sinned without law; while those who sinned in the law shall be judged by the law. This would be conclusive of itself as to the fact that the final and general judgment is here alluded to by the apostle. But if it were within the pale of moral possibility that a doubt could still remain on the point in any intelligent mind, not blinded by a favourite system, that doubt, it might be supposed, would be dissipated by the other expression in the same passage—“In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.” This so manifestly accords

with what is said in various other parts of Scripture relating to the day of general judgment, that I should feel I was not paying due respect to the intelligence of my readers did I add a single word more with the view of showing that my construction of the passage is the right one.

The second portion of Scripture contained in the Epistle to the Romans, which Millenarians seek to make subservient to their system, is that in the eighth chapter, which begins with the eighteenth and ends with the twenty-third verse. "For," says Paul, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not

only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." I see nothing in this passage which calls for comment,—nothing which Millenarians have said in relation to it which requires refutation. All believers, as well as others, do groan in this life under the pressure of their sorrows. Some of these arise from mental and spiritual sources ; others are to be ascribed in their case, as in the case of human nature generally, to bodily causes ; and, therefore, they groan and wait for the redemption of their bodies. They long for and look forward to the resurrection morn, when their bodies shall be visibly redeemed, by being raised under circumstances which shall render them like unto Christ's glorious body.

The third passage in the Romans, which some Millenarians quote in support of their system, will be found in the twenty-sixth verse of the eleventh chapter. "And so," says Paul, "all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the

Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." I see nothing in this verse which requires an answer. In fact, I do not see in it the slightest semblance of Millenarianism. Mr. Birks, indeed, seems to have serious misgivings as to how far it could be made to serve the Millenarian cause: for he contents himself with simply quoting it. He does not offer a single word of comment, with the view of showing how any aid to Millenarianism can be extracted from it.

The fourth and last quotation from the Epistle to the Romans made by Millenarians is that which is contained in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth verses of the fourteenth chapter. "But why," says the inspired writer, "dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." If this passage does not point exclusively to the general judgment, we can only say that language no longer

fulfils the functions for which God has given it to man. "We shall *all* stand before the judgment seat of Christ." Surely that is sufficiently plain. Will any Millenarian furnish me with a specimen of the mode in which he thinks the great fact of a general judgment could be more forcibly or perspicuously expressed? Not less plain is the concluding sentence:—"So then *every* one shall give account of himself to God." According to Millenarians themselves, none of the saints will be judged in the judicial sense of the term, or, indeed, in any sense at all, when Christ comes, according to their view, to reign personally on earth. Such as are in their graves are to be raised, and those who are alive to be changed, and all instantaneously caught up to meet Christ in the air, and so to be ever with the Lord, without any intervening judgment in any form, or, indeed, any intervening circumstance at all. The sounding of the trumpet and their being in glory and triumph with Christ, are to be literally matters of a moment. Is it not, therefore, truly lamentable to see so many good men, and able as well as good, permitting themselves to put

such manifestly erroneous constructions on Scripture in their zeal to serve a favourite system?

Millenarians fancy that they find many more passages in favour of their creed in the Epistles to the *Corinthians* than in the Epistle to the Romans. The first passage in the first of Paul's two epistles to the Church at Corinth, in which Millenarians imagine they discern a proof of the fact that Christ will come to reign personally on earth, is contained in the seventh and eighth verses of the first chapter, and is as follows:—"So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." Millenarians assume the advent of Christ here referred to, as they so often in other cases make similar assumptions, to be his coming to establish a visible or Millenarian kingdom on earth. As no passage of revealed truth has been more generally regarded by the Church of Christ in all the intervening ages, since it was founded by himself, as pointing exclusively to the day of general

judgment, it might have been expected that Millenarian writers, who quote it with so much confidence as substantiating their views, would, at least, have attempted to show in what way it supports their system. It appears to me so clear as to leave no room for doubt, that "the day of our Lord Jesus Christ," here referred to, and which is but another mode of expressing the idea embodied in the previous words, "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," is intended to signify the day of the final judgment of mankind. That, indeed, is manifestly the common-sense view of the passage.

And this will, I feel assured, appear as clearly to other minds, not committed to Millenarianism, as to my own, when a careful consideration is given to two other passages in the third and fourth chapters of this same First Epistle to the Corinthians. The first of the two will be found in verses thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen of the third chapter. "Every man's work," says Paul, "shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any

man's work abide which he hath built there-upon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss : but he himself shall be saved ; yet so as by fire."

I regard this portion of Scripture as pointing, as plainly as can be conceived, to the day of general judgment. "*Every* man's work is then to be made manifest ; for the day shall declare it." "The day" here mentioned is obviously the same as the "day of our Lord Jesus Christ," mentioned in our quotation from the first chapter of the same epistle. Indeed, Millenarians themselves admit this, only they say that instead of the expressions referring to the advent of Christ to judgment, they refer to his coming to reign personally in a visible kingdom on earth. That the former is the right reading of the passage, and the latter an erroneous one, is further evident, if further evidence were necessary, by the expressions which follow. The day, we are told, is to be "revealed by fire, and the fire will try every man's work of what sort it is." This cannot be predicated of the advent of our Lord

for the purpose of establishing a visible kingdom on earth to be personally presided over by Christ himself. There will, according to Millenarians, be no judicial proceedings then in the form of an assize. They say there will be terrible providential judgments on the ungodly, but nothing in the shape of a judicial investigation as to what was the previous character of the parties concerned. But here every man's work is to be tried with fire, in order that it may be ascertained what sort it is. The man whose work abides—that is, comes successfully through the ordeal, which is to be one of fire—is to receive a reward. Now, all this would be wholly unintelligible on the Millenarian hypothesis, because they tell us that there will be nothing in the form of judicial proceeding when Christ comes to reign personally on earth, but that he will come solely and simply to summon from their graves all the dead in himself, and to change in a moment and take up with him, with those raised from their graves, all believers who are then alive. The passage in question, therefore, does not furnish Millenarians with anything which could

be construed, without doing manifest violence to the meaning of language, into a support of their system.

Nor have the Millenarians any better ground for the assumption that their views receive confirmation from the other passage in this same epistle to which I have alluded. The passage will be found in the fifth verse of the fourth chapter. "Therefore," says Paul, "judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."

Here, again, I cannot refrain from the expression of my surprise at the extraordinary manner in which Millenarians put such a construction on particular portions of Scripture as will suit their own views, not only in opposition to *all* the most eminent of our commentators, but to the interpretation of all private Christians who have not adopted their Millenarian creed. Paul had said in the third verse that it was to him a very small thing to be judged of man's judgment, and in the fourth

verse, that he who judged him was the Lord; therefore he told the Corinthians to judge nothing before the time, which manifestly means until the time when Christ shall sit on his throne of judgment at the end of the world. The sentence which follows, "Until the Lord comes," places this interpretation of the words just quoted beyond all doubt. Not less plainly do the sentences which succeed point to the great universal and final audit. When Christ comes he is "to bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and to make manifest the counsels of the hearts." Now, Millenarians do not say that anything of this kind is to take place when our Lord, according to their creed, is to come to reign personally on the earth. He is simply, as has just been remarked, to come to raise the dead saints, and to change the living ones in the twinkling of an eye, and then to take both classes instantaneously up into the air to be ever with himself. Their theory is altogether incompatible with anything resembling an assize at the Second Coming of Christ; whereas the whole of the passage last quoted from the

Epistle to the Church at Corinth conveys in every word the idea of a grand judicial proceeding, in which our Lord shall be the sole presiding Judge. It is to the day of final judgment, therefore, and not to a Millennial coming of Christ, that the passage of Scripture under consideration refers.

The next two passages in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, on which the Millenarians lay much stress as favouring their views, are contained in the fifteenth chapter. The first begins in the twentieth verse, with "Now is Christ risen from the dead," &c., and ends with the twenty-eighth, where it is said that when all things shall be "put under Christ," then shall the Son also himself be subdued unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. The second passage to which I allude begins with the fiftieth verse, where it is stated that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God," and ends with the fifty-fourth verse, with the words, "Death is swallowed up in victory." To these two passages on which the Millenarians set so much store, I shall have occasion to

advert when I come to speak of "The First Resurrection," and the reign of Christ.

The only other passage in the Corinthians which some Millenarians represent as sanctioning their notion of Christ's coming to reign personally in our world, is the well-known tenth verse in the fifth chapter of the Second Epistle,—“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” In the list of texts which Mr. Birks quotes from the Epistles to the Corinthians, this is the last, and he seems to regard it as so clearly pointing to the coming of Christ pre-Millennially, that he does not think it necessary to make one word of comment on the verse to prove that such is the fact. I have made a passing allusion to this verse in a previous part of this volume; but as some of the most able and most eminent of our modern Millenarians confidently quote it as establishing their views, it may be right to recur to it for a moment or two again. Let me then say that I should have thought that

this would have been the last passage in the whole Word of God which any Millenarian would have quoted in favour of his views. That it should be so employed seems to me as striking an exemplification as could be furnished of the powerful influence which a pre-conceived class of opinions can exercise on the mind, in the way of obscuring its perceptions of what would otherwise be as clear as material objects are to the natural eye when seen in the light of a noonday sun.

The portion of Scripture under consideration has, in all ages of the Church, and by all denominations of Christians, been looked on as one of the most specific passages within the whole compass of revelation, in its statement of a day of general judgment. “We must *all* appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” Not all believers only, but all mankind. If, indeed, there could remain a doubt on this point from the construction of the first clause of the verse, the second and concluding clause would entirely and for ever remove it. *Every* one, we are there told, is to appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that he may receive

the things done in his body, *according* to that he hath done, whether it be *good* or *bad*. Could words be put into any form by the greatest master of language which would more conclusively prove that Christ is here spoken of, not as a King coming to reign personally on earth, but solely in the character of the universal Judge of mankind? “The just and the unjust,” “the righteous and the wicked,” “the good and the bad,”—various forms of language in which the two great classes which constitute mankind are described—are all equally, and at the same time, to stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and each one will receive according to what he hath done in this life. Those that have done good will be rewarded and blessed for ever; those that have done evil will be condemned and sentenced to eternal misery. I really do feel that it is lamentable that one should have to defend so plain a passage of Scripture from the grievous misconceptions of its meaning by some of the most gifted and most excellent men of the present day.

But we now come to subsequent epistles of

the same apostle. In his letters to the churches in *Galatia* and *Ephesus*, Paul employs no language which the Millenarians appropriate to themselves as confirmatory of their views respecting the Second Coming of Christ; but they attach much importance to one passage to be found in his Epistle to the *Philippians*. The passage to which I allude is contained in the twentieth and twenty-first verses of the third chapter. "For our conversation," says St. Paul, "is in heaven; from whence we also look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." The very first words in this passage are subversive of the Millenarian theory of Christ's coming to reign personally on earth. "Our conversation is in *heaven*." The meaning of Paul in employing this language manifestly is, that the people of God have their thoughts and their affections fixed on things in heaven; whereas, on the Millenarian hypothesis, they ought to be fixed on things of the earth,

as the earth will be when Christ, according to their creed, will come to establish a visible kingdom here below. Instead of looking upwards, or loving the things above, believers in Jesus ought to be looking forwards with joyful hopes to the state of things which will exist in our lower world at some future period of its history. Yet the biographies of all the eminent Christians, which have from age to age been furnished to us, prove that they have obeyed the injunction of Paul, when he said, addressing the members of the Church at Colosse, "Set your affections on things above, not on the things on the earth."

None but those whose judgments were warped—unconsciously, of course—by a preconceived class of opinions, could discern in this passage even the faintest traces of the personal reign of our Lord. Paul, speaking of himself and believers generally, says, that their conversation was in heaven. The meaning, I repeat, evidently is, that, as all believers ought to have, so the early disciples had their thoughts and affections habitually in heaven,—the heaven in which our Lord and

Saviour is, and that they knew that he would at the time appointed, come from heaven to change the vile bodies of those of his saints who should be alive when he came, and fashion them like unto his own glorious body. And this is what we all believe. This is what we all look forward to, and rejoice in the prospect of its approach. But there is no Millenarianism, not the smallest conceivable quantity, in cherishing this faith and hope. We believe the words of the apostle will be fully verified when Christ comes to judge the world finally, but not till then.

The expression which follows, in that part of the Epistle of the Philippians from which I have quoted, "From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus," furnishes no argument in favour of a belief in the personal reign of our Lord on earth. *Every* believer in Christ looks for, and, where faith is in vigorous exercise, longs for, the advent of the Saviour to our world. The only difference is, that Millenarians look for Christ's coming from heaven to establish a visible kingdom on earth, whereas we, who cannot see any ground

for expecting the personal reign of Christ on earth, can only look for his personal descent from heaven, when he comes finally to judge all mankind. I know how much Millenarians as a body disregard the expositions of our most approved commentators; and, therefore, instead of quoting what any of them say on this passage, I will cite the words of Dr. Gill, the ablest Millenarian of the last century, in relation to it:—"The hearts of God's people," says that distinguished divine, "are where their treasure is: the desires of their souls are towards it; they are seeking things above, and long to be in their own city, and their Father's house, where Christ is, and to be at home with him, and for ever with him."

The next verse of this epistle which the Millenarians contend is favourable to their creed, is contained in the fourth chapter:—"Let," says Paul, in the fourth verse of the chapter, "let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand." The latter expression may admit of one of two meanings, or may be susceptible of both. Paul, when he employed the words, may have had in his

mind's eye the impending destruction of Jerusalem, and the terrible judgments by which that catastrophe was to be preceded and accompanied. I have shown, in a previous part of this work, that Jesus did speak, in the days of his flesh, of his coming to revisit our world, when referring to the destruction which Jerusalem and the temple were destined to undergo. This is the view which Guyse takes of the meaning of the words, with this addition, that the phrase was an implied assurance that the Philippians would be protected by God, and that in the destruction about to befall the Temple and the city they would see an exemplification of the Divine displeasure with the Jews because they had so relentlessly persecuted those who professed their faith in Christ. I think, therefore, there is fair ground for putting the construction on the verse in question which I have done. Or, it may be, that the apostle's employment of the phrase, "The Lord is at hand," had relation to his coming to judge the world on the great day appointed by God.

The Epistle to the *Colossians* contains only

one sentence on which Millenarians fix as favouring their hypothesis of the personal reign of Christ. It is in the fourth verse of the third chapter of that epistle. "When Christ," says Paul, "who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." I have no argument to offer here in opposition to Millenarianism, because I see nothing wherewith to grapple. I know of no real anti-Millenarian Christian who does not as fully believe as he does in any truth revealed in the Word of God, that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, all his people shall also appear with him in glory. The difference between Millenarians and ourselves consists simply in this, that they assume that the glory in which the saints will appear when Christ appears will be a Millennial glory on earth, whereas we believe that though the saints who are in their graves shall come forth in glorious bodies, and that the living saints will instantaneously undergo a glorious transformation, both physical and spiritual, yet that it is in heaven, strictly speaking, that we are destined to appear in glory, when Christ, who

is our life, shall appear. In numerous instances Millenarians beg the question. They take it for granted, and do not even attempt to show, that certain portions of Scripture are conclusive as to the soundness of their theory of the personal reign of Christ on the earth; but I know of no instance more striking than this. There is not a word in the verse itself, nor in what precedes or follows, which gives the slightest countenance to such a construction of the text in question, and yet we find eminent divines among the Millenarians—Mr. Birks may be mentioned as one of the number—who coolly and confidently assume that the appearing of our Lord here spoken of refers to his coming to our earth to establish a glorious visible kingdom upon it over which he shall reign.

What I have stated above is the view which most of our eminent annotators on the Word of God take of the brief sentence. Others are of opinion that it may have a double reference. They think that it refers both to the destruction of Jerusalem, and to the day of final judgment. But whatever construction is put on the words,

there is not the least reason for supposing that they refer to Christ's coming to our world to reign personally on the earth. So far as I am conversant with evangelical theology, I do not believe that until within the last forty or fifty years, any divine of eminence in this or in any other land, ever imagined that the Apostle Paul, in the phrase under consideration, had the eye of his mind fixed on the Second Coming of Christ to establish a visible kingdom on earth.

I come now to the two Epistles of Paul to the *Thessalonians*. And to certain passages in these I bespeak the earnest attention of those into whose hands this work may fall, because all, or nearly all, Millenarians concur in regarding the two epistles in question as constituting the chief foundation on which the personal reign theory is based. Here Millenarians take their stand. Some of the most zealous of their number even go so far as deliberately to say that if their system had no other sanction in the Word of God, there is enough here to establish that system on a basis firm as the eternal rocks. When the late Rev. Mr. Hewit-

son, to whom I have referred in a previous part of this volume, stated in one of his letters to a friend—which letter will be found in the Rev. John Baillie's Memoir of that excellent man—that if he were compelled to give up all other parts of Scripture as proving the fact of a personal reign of Christ on earth he would hold that fact to be proved by these two epistles—he but expressed a sentiment which is shared by a very large number of eminent Millenarians. Several of them have accordingly, in their writings, devoted an unusual amount of space to the consideration of those parts of the Epistles to the Thessalonians, which, as they feel persuaded, more particularly point to and prove the establishment of a visible kingdom of Christ on earth, presided over in person by himself, when he shall come a second time to our world. I know of no modern Millenarian author who has gone more fully or more ably into this portion of Scripture as bearing on the question of the perpetual reign, than Mr. Benjamin Wills Newton. In the third series of his "Aids to Prophetic Inquiry,"—a work abounding with interesting ecclesiastical information,

with learned criticism, and the fruits of varied research,—he devotes, including his “Notes,” twelve closely printed pages to the second chapter of the Second Epistle. To this part of Paul’s second address to the Thessalonians I shall have occasion to refer presently ; but before doing so it is right that I should briefly advert to those other portions of these epistles which Millenarians maintain furnish conclusive testimony to what they regard as the great fact that Christ is to come, when he appears the second time, to establish a visible kingdom on earth.

First of all, then, Millenarians point us to the twelfth and thirteenth verses of the third chapter of the first of the two epistles : “ And the Lord,” says Paul, “ make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you : to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” The latter clause of these two verses is that on which Millenarians dwell, as showing that Christ will come again to this

world, accompanied by all his saints. No believer in Christ, so far as I am aware, doubts, much less denies, that our Lord will come again to our world, and that when he does he will be accompanied by all his saints who shall be in glory until the hour of his second advent. We all admit this as freely and fully as our Millenarian brethren do. But then we maintain, in contradistinction from their belief, that the next coming of Christ will be not to reign personally on earth, but to finally judge all mankind. I have sought to prove in my previous pages that none of the passages I have hitherto considered, which are quoted by Millenarians in support of their views, give the slightest sanction to the theory of Christ's personal reign on earth, but that they either refer to the last great assize, or to other events entirely unconnected with the idea of our Lord's personal reign in our world. And such is the sense, in which, I maintain, the verse in question ought to be understood.

In the fourth chapter of the same First Epistle to the Thessalonians, there is a passage on which Millenarians lay unusual stress,

as favouring their views. It begins with the fifteenth and ends with the seventeenth verse : “For this,” says Paul, “we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God : and the dead in Christ shall rise first : then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air : and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” First of all, let me remark that the allusion to the “trump of God” is a parallel expression to what will be found in the fifty-second verse of the fifteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. “The last trump,” and “the trumpet shall sound,” are phrases which will be found in the latter passage, where Paul says in continuation, “Then shall be brought to pass the saying which is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.” To this portion of the First Epistle to the Corinthians I shall have occasion to advert at greater length

when I come to my chapter on "The First Resurrection." In the mean time, I content myself with simply saying that the passage in the Corinthians cannot relate to the coming of Christ to reign on earth in the Millennial sense of the phrase, because death, as Millenarians themselves all admit, will occur during the thousand years as it does now. There would, therefore, be neither propriety nor truth in the expression of the apostle when he says that *then* death will be swallowed up in victory. The passage must refer to the last day of the world's existence, because then, and only then, will it be true that there will be no more death, or, in other words, that Death himself will be destroyed.

And if it be thus, as I believe, placed beyond all reasonable doubt that the passage in question relates to the general judgment alone, it cannot, without a violation of those logical rules, in accordance with which all controversies ought to be conducted, be disputed that the passage in the fourth chapter of the First Epistle to the Thessalonians, which is under consideration, in which essentially the same

expressions occur, relates also, not to the coming of Christ to reign personally on earth, but to judge all mankind.

If the Scriptures contained no other passage confirmatory of this fact than the thirteenth and fourteenth verses of the twentieth chapter of the Revelation, that would establish it in the fullest manner. "And the sea," says John, "gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

This is conclusive. There is another passage in the first chapter of the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, which is one of those portions of New Testament Scripture which Millenarians most frequently quote in support of their views. It begins with the sixth and ends with the eighth verse. "Seeing it is," says Paul, "a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; and to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty

angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." I should have thought that no intelligent reader of his Bible could have interpreted this portion of God's Word in any other sense than as pointing to the solemnities incident to the circumstances under which our Lord shall come on the day of general judgment to reward every man according to the deeds which he hath done in the body, whether these have been good or evil; but if there could have been the semblance of a reason for believing that the passage would have admitted of another construction, I should have thought that one single phrase in the seventh verse would have satisfied any well-informed mind—not in any way influenced by a previously adopted hypothesis—that a Millenarian construction of the language of the apostle would have been at variance with the scope of the passage. The phrase is, that those who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, will "be punished with *everlasting destruction*, from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of his power."

It is important I should here observe in passing, that the expression, "punished with everlasting destruction," does not mean everlasting annihilation, or annihilation at all. As compared with the dismal doom of the unpardoned sinner, annihilation would be no punishment at all to him. So far, indeed, would it be from this, that it is just the very thing he would desire, and for which he will at the "End of all Things" pray, not to God, but to the rocks and mountains. The wicked, we are told, will call on the hills and rocks, on the last great day, to fall upon them, and cover them from the face of their Judge. But the "rocks and mountains" will be deaf to their cry for annihilation. The "everlasting destruction," spoken of in the passage in question, means everlasting punishment. In other words, it means that the wicked shall be punished with everlasting misery.

Now, this cannot be true of *all* the workers of iniquity when our Lord comes again, according to the Millenarian theory, to our earth. If all who, when Christ comes, know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus

Christ, were to be visited with *everlasting destruction*, or misery, there would remain none of the ungodly on the earth; while all the righteous, it will be remembered, are to be caught up into the air, to be for ever with the Lord. And if this is to be so—if the righteous are to be transformed in the twinkling of an eye, their bodies being made like unto Christ's glorious body, and they caught up into the air to be for ever with the Lord, while all the ungodly are to be everlastingly destroyed,—then we are forced to come to the conclusion that the earth will be depopulated,—will become an utter desolation from one end to the other. There will consequently be no intelligent beings over whom Christ and the saints can reign. Are our Millenarian friends prepared for this result? It is an inevitable conclusion from their premises. But strictly logical as the conclusion would be from the passage of Scripture in question,—one on which Millenarians lay so much stress,—they do not say that the inhabitants are all to be swept from off the face of the earth when our Lord comes a second time. At least, no Millenarians with

whom I have privately conversed, or whose works on the subject I have read, go so far as to say that all the workers of iniquity will then be destroyed. So far from Millenarians entertaining any such view, they admit that there will be much of sin and consequent sorrow in the world during the whole of the Millennial era. Many, indeed, of the most eminent Millenarian authors strenuously maintain that the entire thousand years will be one continued, uninterrupted period of judgment as regards the ungodly. Among those writers in favour of the personal reign of Christ, who hold this notion, I may mention the names of Mr. Molyneux, Dr. Tregelles, Mr. B. W. Newton, Mr. R. Govett, &c. &c.

If, then, all the wicked are not to be punished with *everlasting* destruction when Christ comes again, in the Millenarian sense of the words, the passage under consideration cannot refer to a coming of Christ in accordance with their theory; and, therefore, as no one believes in another coming of our Lord, the coming referred to in the passage to which we are alluding must be the coming of Christ to judge the world. *Then*, indeed, but not till then, will all

who know not God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, be punished with everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power.

But I come now to that part of the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians to which the majority of Millenarians attach greater importance, as bearing on the question of the personal reign of Christ on earth, than to any other portion of the inspired volume. The passage begins at the beginning of the second chapter, and continues down till the conclusion of the eighth verse. "Now," says St. Paul, "we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is

God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you all these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."

Let me beseech my Millenarian brethren to give to this portion of the Word of God their prayerful and careful *re-consideration*. They are all agreed—at least I have never, either in reading Millenarian books or in conversing with Millenarians, met with a single dissident—in regarding the coming of our Lord, as spoken of in the passage, as his coming to establish his personal reign on earth. Equally unanimous are our Millenarian friends in believing, and even in dogmatically affirming, that the Second Advent of Christ to reign personally on earth is "the hope of the church." How, then, is the fact that they regard the personal reign of Christ on our world as "the

hope of the church " to be reconciled with the state of terrible alarm in which the Thessalonians were at the idea of his immediate coming in his Millennial glory? The two things are manifestly incompatible; they cannot both be true. The Millenarians are not content with simply stating the fact, as they believe it, of our Lord's personal reign on earth, but they express themselves in the most emphatic language on the subject. In many instances, indeed, we see them working themselves up into a state of feeling which approaches rapture when dwelling on the coming of our Lord to establish a visible kingdom in the world. And, in accordance with this feeling, they not only continually and fervently pray that God would hasten the coming and kingdom of Christ, but they betray manifest impatience that it should be delayed a single day longer. How unlike they are to the Thessalonians! Instead of the latter rejoicing with inexpressible joy, as they ought to have done, according to our modern Millenarians, in the full conviction that the Lord's advent to reign personally on the earth was at hand, they were so "shaken in their

minds," "so troubled" at the thought that he was thus on the eve of coming, that Paul thought it needful to address a most earnest remonstrance to them in relation to their state of fear and trembling. He sought to quiet their minds by assuring them that not only was "the day of Christ" not at hand, but that that day should not come until certain circumstances, which he specifies, had occurred,—which circumstances were not, from their nature, to be expected during the lifetime of the Thessalonians.

Some Millenarians of our day may continue to hold that the advent of Christ to reign personally on earth is "the hope of the church," but surely it would be pushing their principles to a point at variance alike with the teachings of Scripture and historical testimony, to persist in maintaining, after what we have said, that the early Christians—assuming that the Thessalonians were fair specimens of the believers of their day—regarded the personal advent of Christ as "the hope of the church." Instead of rejoicing in the supposed impending coming of their Lord, the very idea seems to

have thrown the Thessalonians into a state of inconceivable consternation.

With this passage before them, in which the Thessalonians are described as in a state of such extreme consternation from the impression that, as Millenarians say, Christ was on the eve of coming to reign personally on earth—I am amazed that our Millenarian brethren do not see how entirely at variance with the fact are their representations of the unspeakable comfort which their belief in the personal reign of their Lord afforded to the early Christians. Surely Dr. Bonar must, when he penned the following words, have forgotten for the moment the passage in the Thessalonians to which I have been adverting. “The early churches,” says he, “were ever on the eager watch to hail his [Christ’s] advent. It was the resting-place of their hopes, the strength of their souls, the very life of their joy. They allowed no object to intervene between them and their Lord’s appearing: they were ever waiting and looking for it, as if all between it and them were a dreary, rugged waste. As, in a night of clouds, when no small tempest lies upon his vessel,

the seaman's eye is ever on the outlook for the star of morning, so were their anxious eyes, amid tribulation and darkness, ever watching for the appearing of 'the bright and morning star.'” Surely Dr. Bonar, when inditing this passage, ought, at least, to have made some such qualification as this, “The early Christians, with the exception of the Thessalonians, who were troubled in their minds at the idea, hailed with joy the expected second coming of Christ to reign on the earth,” &c.

Many, perhaps the majority of Millenarians imagine that they will diminish the difficulty, as affecting their system, which the view I have taken of this passage presents, by putting upon it a different construction from the one which is generally received. They maintain that the phrase, “the day of Christ is at hand” is incorrectly translated. They say the words ought to be, “the day of the Lord has come,” or “set in;” and that, consequently, the Thessalonians imagined that they were just about to be plunged into a sea of troubles such as the earth had never before witnessed. I have met with some intellectual Millenarians

who have pledged themselves to abandon entirely their Millenarian views, if it could be conclusively shown that the words "the day of Christ is at hand" were the correct translation of the sentence in the original. All I can say is, that some of the most eminent of our theological critics maintain, in their works, that the words "the day of Christ is at hand" furnish us with an accurate translation of the phrase in the original. And I have it from the lips of eminent Biblical scholars, who occupy at the present moment high places in the realms of Greek literature, and who are at the same time eminent for their acquaintance with the Scriptures, that the English translation is the right one.

Mr. Benjamin Wills Newton endeavours to get over the difficulty arising from the fear and trembling of the Thessalonians at the idea of the coming of the Lord to reign personally on earth, by saying that the Thessalonians did not believe, as some other Millenarians suppose they did, that the day of the Lord had begun on the earth, but that they believed it had commenced or "set in" in heaven. The

question, on hearing this hypothesis propounded, naturally arises, "How, supposing such to be the case, did the Thessalonians come to imagine that they knew what was taking place in heaven?" In heaven, there is ground to believe, its inhabitants do know to a greater or less extent what is taking place on earth; but, assuredly, we have no authority in the Scriptures for the belief that the saints on earth are in any way cognizant of what is taking place in heaven. Of course we know that the glorified saints of God are ever engaged in singing his high praises, and in every respect doing his will; but beyond that we know nothing of what takes place in the abodes of celestial bliss.

Mr. Newton seems to be sensible of the difficulty here, and seeks to obviate it by representing the Thessalonians as having fancied that they saw certain signs of the "setting in" of our Lord's advent in the heavenly world. If so, they must have been at once the most fanciful and the most unacquainted with Christian truth of any body of true believers of whom we have any record, either in the Bible

or in uninspired ecclesiastical history. We read of signs being given in the heavens—whereby is meant the firmament—of events which are on the eve of taking place on the earth, but nothing is anywhere said in Scripture of signs being given us on earth of what is taking place in heaven. If Mr. Newton's mode of meeting the difficulty connected with the consternation of the Thessalonians, consequent on their belief that the "day of Christ" had commenced, or "set in" in heaven, be the right one, what, let us ask, were the signs which the Thessalonians saw, or imagined they saw, which led them to this conclusion, and threw them into a paroxysm of terror? Paul says nothing on that point, and Mr. Newton is equally silent. Christ himself has told us "that of that day, and of that hour"—which expression Millenarians say means the Second Coming of Christ to reign personally on earth—"knoweth no man, no, not the angels in heaven;" but if Mr. Newton's view be correct, that there will be preparation in heaven, more or less lengthened, for Christ's Second Coming to our earth, then the angels *will* know "of

the day and the hour" in which his Second advent is to take place.

I cannot, therefore, discover anything calculated to remove the difficulty connected with the phrase in question, in Mr. Newton's mode of dealing with it. Nor do I agree with him when he expresses his conviction that the Second Advent of our Lord will have "set in" for some time in heaven, before there are any indications of its commencement on earth. I see no scriptural authority for this opinion.

The expression "at hand" is used in various other portions of the New Testament, and in most instances it applies to events or circumstances which are about to happen. On a memorable occasion, Christ said to his disciples that when the trees shoot forth their leaves, summer is nigh at hand; it had not come, but it soon would. I will quote another instance to the same effect from the sayings of the Saviour, but will first refer to what is said, of similar import, by Paul and John the Baptist. Paul employs the phrase "at hand" in various other places than the one to which I am referring. Writing to the Romans, he says,

“The night is far spent, the day is at hand.” The day had not arrived, but it was coming, and was even near. In his Epistle to the Philippians, Paul uses the same expression, “The Lord is at hand;” but there is neither in what goes before, nor in what comes after the phrase, the slightest reason to suppose that the apostle meant either that Christ had come, or, as Mr. Newton affirms in his construction of the passage under consideration, that the advent of our Lord had set in in heaven as a preliminary step to his personal coming from heaven to establish a visible kingdom in our world. When the same apostle says in his Epistle to Timothy, “The time of my departure is at hand,” he could not have meant that it had come, for that would have been contrary to the fact. His death did not occur for some time afterwards. So when John the Baptist, the divinely appointed messenger to herald the approach of our Lord, in connection with his public ministry, went about beseeching men to repent because the kingdom of heaven was at hand, his language could not be construed into a proclamation of the fact that the kingdom

of heaven was come, for Christ had not yet commenced his public ministry. Our Lord, himself, also, in the eighteenth verse of the twenty-sixth chapter of Matthew, makes use of the phrase "at hand" in relation to the time of his crucifixion. "My time," he says, "is at hand." But we know from the evangelistic narrative that his time had not yet come. After he had thus spoken he said and did many things before he "bowed his head and gave up the ghost." On the evening of the day on which he so expressed himself, he partook of the passover with his disciples, and instituted his own Supper, to be celebrated till the end of the world in commemoration of his death. The words which he spoke, and the awful mental anguish which he endured in the garden of Gethsemane, were spoken and borne after he had said that his time was at hand. His betrayal by Judas, his denial by Peter, and his being delivered bound to Pilate, and all that was preliminary to his utterance of the last words that ever fell from his Divine lips, "It is finished,"—were incidents which occurred before his time had come. And, if it

be thus demonstrable that the phrase "at hand" is not used to signify that it has come, or is present, but only that it is near or coming, I cannot concede to our Millenarian brethren the right to construe it in the sense of an event or incident which has actually taken place. And if this be so, the Millenarians have no right to interpret the words in the second verse of the second chapter in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians in a sense different from what the same words mean in other parts of the New Testament. There, as in other parts of Scripture, the obvious meaning of the expression "at hand," as applied to the Second Advent of our Lord, is that he was coming, not that he had already come.

But even supposing we were to concede to the advocates of Millenarianism, that in the Thessalonians the words, "The day of Christ is at hand," ought to be translated "the day of Christ is present;" or as Mr. B. Wills Newton renders the passage, "the day of the Lord has commenced in heaven," I do not see what service the concession would render to the Millenarian cause. As the Thessalonians

were undeniably in a state of the most profound alarm at the idea of the Lord having come to reign personally on earth—according to the Millenarian theory—it surely would not have relieved their minds from the consternation which filled them had Paul told them that our Lord had not, as they believed, actually come, but was only just about to descend from heaven to earth. A very few months, or weeks, or it may be days, would have been the only interval between the moment at which Paul spoke to them and Christ's Personal Advent. It could, therefore, have but afforded them very small consolation had Paul been able to interpret the phrase, "The day of Christ is at hand," either in the same sense as Millenarians generally do, or in accordance with the import which, in the view of Mr. B. Wills Newton, ought to be attached to it.

But the apostle did not seek to quiet the fears and comfort the hearts of the Thessalonians by any such interpretation of the words. He adopted a different course in his desire to minister consolation to them. He spoke to them as to those who regarded the Advent of

Christ, not as having come, but as to come; and he told them that their belief that it was near had no foundation. He assigned, as has already been remarked, the reasons why it could not be, as they believed it was, just on the eve of being ushered in. Certain things which he specified must occur before that day could come, and from the nature of the things which must precede the advent of the day of Christ, the Thessalonians were doubtless satisfied that the day of Christ was yet distant.

But, then, who can help—as before remarked—feeling what poor Millenarians the Thessalonians were? for modern Millenarians, as I have already said, not only claim this passage as favouring their views, but attach more importance to it, in connection with other things in the two epistles of Paul to the Church at Thessalonica, than to any other passage in the Word of God. One almost wonders that the Millenarians of the present day do not disown the Millenarians of the Church at Thessalonica, seeing that while modern Millenarians regard the personal coming of Christ to our world to reign over it as their “glorious hope,” the

source of their greatest joy, the thing which, above all others, they long for and pray for,—the Thessalonian Millenarians were thrown into a state of the utmost consternation at the bare thought of the day of Christ being at hand. Had they been true to their Millenarian principles, as these principles are described by the Millenarians of our day, they would have been filled with ecstatic delight at the thought of their Lord being on the eve of coming to set up a visible kingdom of transcendent glory on earth,—in which glory they would have been partakers, as according to their own principles they were to sit on thrones with their Lord, and to share with him in the administration of the government of the world. But the Thessalonians were not Millenarians in the sense of Christ's coming to reign personally on earth. It was not his advent, in that sense, that filled their minds with such awful alarm. It was the apprehension, or rather, I should say, the belief, that the world was coming to an end, and that the terrible judgments of God had begun.

But if the passage in the Thessalonians, now under consideration, does not refer to the com-

ing of Christ to reign personally on earth, the question will naturally suggest itself, “To what coming of Christ does it refer?” Some eminent authors are of opinion—taking the passage in connection with several expressions in the previous chapter—that the allusion of Paul is to the terrible troubles which were then impending over Jerusalem and the Jews as a nation. This was the view taken of the passage by Grotius, Hammond, Le Clerc, Whitby, and other able and learned expositors of the New Testament, who flourished in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. I regard this, as I shall presently show, to be one right construction of this portion of Scripture; but I do not consider it to be the only interpretation of which the passage admits, because Christ did not come at the destruction of Jerusalem—was not “revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire.” Nor did our Lord then take vengeance on them who knew not God, and did not obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Neither did Christ, at the time when Jerusalem was destroyed, punish the Jews with *everlasting* destruction from the

presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. Our Lord, indeed, was not *personally* present at that time, though he was present in the providential sense of the term,—just as he is, as God, present at all times in every place. The allusion of the apostle, therefore, could not be exclusively to the awful judgments which were destined, soon after he wrote his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, to break on the guilty heads of the inhabitants of Jerusalem. My conviction is, that the passage contains a double allusion. I fully believe that it does refer to what was coming on Jerusalem, though not to that event alone. I believe that in this sense parts of the two first chapters of the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians are parallel to parts of the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew, which, I trust, I have satisfactorily shown to refer both to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the coming of our Lord for the final judgment of all mankind. It were easy, but it is not necessary, to mention many instances in which particular Scriptures have a double meaning, and in which events which do

not seem to be directly connected, and which are very remote in relation to the time of their occurrence,—are nevertheless classed together.

That the apostle had in view, in the passage in question, the calamities with which Jerusalem was about to be visited, is, I think, sufficiently clear from the sixth verse of the first chapter, in which he says, “Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you.” The Thessalonian converts, it is evident, not only from this verse, but from other passages in this second epistle to them, had been grievously persecuted by the Jews; and Paul, in the fourth verse, had warmly commended them for the patience and faith which they had exercised in the midst of “the persecutions and tribulations” which they had to “endure.” But then, on the other hand, there is abundant evidence to show that Paul also referred, in the first and second chapters of his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, to the coming of Christ to judgment. We read of his being “revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not

God, and obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." We also read of all such persons being "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and the glory of his power, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints." The expression, "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power," I regard as synonymous with the words of our Lord, when he shall say to the unrighteous on the day of judgment, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." This is the view taken by Macknight, Dr. Benson, Guyse, the late Dr. Blomfield, and others; but I cannot see on what ground the words exclude the former view. I accept both constructions. That certain phrases in the chapters in question, relate to the impending destruction of Jerusalem, and others to the coming of Christ to judgment, seem, indeed, so clear to me as not to admit of a moment's doubt. This was the opinion of Dr. Adam Clarke, as will be seen on a reference to his observations on the two chapters.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST—WHAT THE EPISTLES SAY OF THE EVENT. (*Concluded.*)

THE Epistles of Paul to *Timothy* do not contain much that is claimed by the Millenarians as confirmatory of their belief of the personal reign of Christ on earth. From the First Epistle they make no quotation, with one single exception. That exception is confined to the fourteenth verse of the sixth chapter. In that verse Paul charges Timothy that he keep his commandment to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life, “without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ.” I cannot see in this passage the slightest warrant for concluding that the “appearing” of our Lord Jesus Christ refers to our Saviour’s coming to reign personally

on earth during a period of a thousand years. I believe the “appearing” applies to the second coming of Christ to judgment. This conviction receives confirmation from two other passages in the fourth chapter of the Second Epistle from the same apostle to the same Timothy—his “own son in the faith.” In the first and second verses of this fourth chapter, Paul says, addressing Timothy, “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.” Now, it will be observed that Christ’s “appearing” again in our world is, in the first of the two verses, connected with his judging “the quick and the dead.” And there cannot be a doubt that the phrase “appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ,” employed by Paul in the First Epistle, refers equally to the coming of Christ to “judge the quick and the dead.” And, if so, the “appearing” of Christ there spoken of must have reference to his coming to judge

all mankind ; inasmuch as in the quotation I have made from the Second Epistle to Timothy, it is distinctly stated to be to judge the quick and the dead. “The quick and the dead” will not be judged until the sound of the last trump shall be heard in all parts of the world and in the deepest caverns of the sea. That is the destined day on which all who are in their graves shall come forth, and when the quick and the dead in all their universality will have to stand before the bar of their Divine Master. The phrase “his appearing,” cannot, therefore, apply to his advent to our earth to reign personally on it during the Millennium. Then, it will be observed, Paul adds to the words “his appearing,” “and his kingdom.” Millenarians, in accordance with their views, say that by his “kingdom” is here meant a Millennial reign of a thousand years on the earth. The assumption is not only groundless, but it can be conclusively shown to be so ; for in the eighteenth verse of the same chapter, Paul expresses his full conviction that he would be kept or preserved by God, and brought at last to his *heavenly* kingdom.

“And the Lord,” says he, “shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his *heavenly* kingdom.” There cannot be a question that the “kingdom” here alluded to is the same “kingdom” as is referred to in the first verse, and that consequently it is of the *heavenly* kingdom that the apostle in both instances speaks. Now, we know that the Millennial kingdom is to be literally an earthly kingdom. That Christ is to come to our *earth* to reign a thousand years on it, is the great distinguishing doctrine of our Millenarian brethren. But here the kingdom which is conjoined with the “appearing” of our Lord, is a *heavenly* kingdom, and therefore the Millenarians cannot assign the semblance of a reason for regarding the passages in question as giving countenance to their theory of a personal reign of Christ in our world. That the references in the two passages in question are to the general judgment, and not, as the Millenarians assume, to his coming to reign personally, is made still more evident from the seventh and eighth verses of the same fourth chapter of the Second Epistle to Timothy : “I

have," says Paul, "fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

Here, the fact of our Lord's personal appearance again in our world, is, as in the former verse, connected with Christ in his grand judicial capacity at the end of all things. It is from the Lord, "the righteous Judge," that Paul and all other believers in Christ, who love the Lord's appearing, will receive their crown "on that day." Nothing could be more clear, in the absence of a specific statement to that effect, than that "the crown of righteousness" will be given after there has been a judicial examination of the claims which the parties receiving it had to it. I need hardly say that when I speak of the "claims" to "a crown of righteousness" of any descendant of our first parents—fallen as they were, and involving in their guilt all their posterity, because of the federal relation they sustained to the human race—I speak only of

those who have claims to this crown in virtue of the covenant which God has made with them, or, in other words, because they are made righteous in the sight of God,—because the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ has become theirs through an appropriating faith in his finished work. “The Lord, the righteous Judge,” will, therefore, only fulfil “in that day,” judicial functions in the sense of ascertaining who are the righteous and who are the wicked, and making, accordingly, an eternal separation between the two classes. Now, this we know will not occur, even according to Millenarians themselves, on the advent of Christ, to reign, as they believe, on the earth. He will come, they say, to inflict fearful judgments, but not to hold the grand assize of which the Scriptures so largely speak. The “appearing” of Christ, therefore, here referred to, cannot be an appearing in the Millenarian sense of the word; but the “appearing” of our Lord at the end of the world, when he will set his throne, open the books, and act judicially in relation to all mankind. Viewed in that sense, there is a force

in the expression “at that day,” which must be seen and felt by every one who reflects on the phrase. Viewed in the light of Millenarianism, one fails to perceive any force in it at all.

In the Epistle of Paul to *Titus*, there is only one passage which the Millenarians point to as corroborative of their belief in the personal coming of Christ to reign on the earth. The passage to which I refer is in the thirteenth verse of the second chapter: “Looking,” says Paul, “for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” I can offer no argument against the view which Millenarians take of this text, because they content themselves with the assumption—as they do in so many other cases—that it refers to the Second Advent of our Lord to reign personally on earth. If, as I trust, I have satisfactorily shown, the personal appearing of Christ again in our world, will be to judge finally all mankind, surely, to say the least, the presumption is, that it is to the appearance of our Lord in that capacity and for that purpose that the apostle here alludes. This construction of the

passage is strengthened by the fact that the "blessed hope," for the realisation of which Titus was to look, in association with the appearing of our Lord, is evidently the hope of which the same apostle speaks in his Epistle to the Colossians, when he says, "the hope laid up for him in heaven." Had Paul been a Millenarian, he would have said, or at least ought to have implied,—“the hope laid up for you on earth.”

Passing over the Epistle to *Philemon*, in which the Millenarians do not find anything to sanction their theory of the personal reign of Christ, we come to the Epistle to the *Hebrews*. In that book they say they are furnished with ample evidence in support of their views. I pass over such portions of the *Hebrews* as they look upon only in the light of subordinate testimony to what they advance on the point. There is no part of the *Hebrews* which furnishes the Millenarians with what they regard as such conclusive evidence in their favour, as the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth verses of the ninth chapter. "And as," says the inspired penman of that epistle, "it

is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment : so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many ; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.”

Now, so far from these two verses giving any countenance to the Millenarian belief in the personal reign of Christ on earth, I scarcely know any portion of Scripture which, if carefully examined and rightly understood, is more irreconcilable with the Millenarian creed. The twenty-seventh verse enunciates first, that it is appointed unto men—all men, is meant—once to die. No one doubts that. It is one of those truths which daily observation brings home to the minds of us all in corroboration of the statements of Scripture on the subject. But when we die, all is not over. On the contrary, the most momentous matters as affecting us, are yet to come. “But,” says the writer to the Hebrews, “after this the judgment.” There is a sense in which individual judgment comes immediately after death ; but that is only, strictly speaking, a judgment of the soul. It is clear, however, that it is the

general judgment of mankind at the last day to which the words in question refer; for it is said, in the end of the twenty-eighth verse, “to them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.” Now, in this short sentence, two things are stated, either of which would be sufficient of itself to overthrow the Millenarian hypothesis of a personal reign of Christ on earth. The first of these two things is, that our Lord is to appear a *second* time. That clearly implies that he is only to appear a second time, or to come again once more to our world. But the Millenarian theory necessarily involves, at least, a *third*—and with regard to many Millenarians, as I shall show hereafter, a *fourth*—coming of our Lord, because Millenarians do not deny that Christ will come to our earth to judge finally all mankind. On the contrary, they admit that they believe in a general judgment. It is true, they are inconsistent in this, because they apply exclusively to the next advent of Christ, in the Millenarian sense, nearly all the passages of Scripture which formerly had, during all the previous

history of the Church of Christ, been regarded by every one holding evangelical views, as pointing solely to the day of general judgment. But I will not dwell on their inconsistency in relation to this aspect of the Millenarian question. In the scriptural passage under consideration, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of Christ's coming a *second* time in such a way as to exclude all idea of a third or subsequent advent of our Lord. But if they are right in their opinion that the second coming here referred to is his coming to reign personally on earth, then, I repeat, our Lord must come a *third* time to judge the world. Here Millenarians are placed in a difficulty, out of which I hold it to be impossible they can extricate themselves, unless, indeed, they are prepared—which, as I have already remarked, they are not—to deny that Christ is to come again for the purpose of a general and final judgment of the world. I commend with all earnestness this aspect of the question to our Millenarian brother believers in Christ, with the view of their prayerfully reconsidering the ground on which they stand. Let me

add, that until recently, no Millenarian ever thought of pressing this passage into the service of their system. Dr. Gill, who, as I have before mentioned, was the most eminent divine of whom Millenarians can boast as sharing their views, puts the same construction on this part of Scripture as I have done. He, therefore, could not find in it any support to the Millenarian system. He concludes his notes on the latter of the two verses by the remark, that as this will be our Lord's second personal appearance on earth, so it will be his last.

But there is a second thing in the sentence in question, which I hold to be no less subversive of the Millenarian hypothesis. Christ, we are told, is to appear the second time without sin unto salvation. The phrase "without sin" admits, I think, of two constructions. Its primary meaning I believe to be, that when Christ comes again into our world it will not be as our substitute, or as the sin-bearer. By his one sacrifice of himself he has for ever, in that sense, put away sin, and consequently there remaineth no more sacrifice for him to

offer for sin. In that sense, therefore, our Lord when he comes again will come without sin. This is the view which Dr. Gill, Whitby, Macknight, Moses Stuart, and, indeed, nearly all our Biblical critics and most approved commentators, take of the expression. But my belief is that the words “without sin” admit of another interpretation. The expression which follows—“unto salvation”—as completing the development of the idea which the apostle had in his mind, must, I feel assured, have been intended to be received in this sense. The “salvation” here spoken of cannot in the nature of things mean a Millennial salvation, which is that only of the risen saints, or of those alone who shall be instantaneously transformed being taken up to the air to be there with the Lord. The term obviously means that salvation which consists in being received into heaven, and there, around the throne of God, singing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, and realising in all their inexpressible import the words which the psalmist employed when, addressing God, he said, “In thy presence there is fulness of joy;

at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Here, then, the foundations of another pillar in the Millennial edifice are entirely destroyed.

There are only two more passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews which Millenarians quote in confirmation of their views respecting the Second Coming of Christ. The one is the twenty-fifth verse of the tenth chapter. "Not," says the writer, "forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." The words on which Millenarians lay stress in this verse constitute the last clause—"as ye see the day approaching." They assume that the "day" here spoken of is the day of Christ's descent from heaven to reign personally on earth. Such an interpretation is pure assumption. There is not the shadow of an argument in favour of it; and therefore I am absolved from the necessity of showing that the words do not sanction the Millenarian system. The same remark applies to the other verse—the thirty-seventh—to which I have

alluded. "For yet a little while," says the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, "and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry." No one who had not previously entertained Millenarian notions would ever have thought of forming them from this brief sentence, for there is nothing in it which gives the slightest countenance to the theory of a personal reigning of Christ on earth after his Second Advent.

Millenarians do not pretend to find any support to their system in the Epistle of *James*, with the exception of that which they maintain is to be found in the seventh and eighth verses of the fifth chapter—"Be patient therefore, brethren," says James, "unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh." Here again the idea of those verses having a reference to Christ's coming to reign personally on earth, is wholly gratuitous. There is nothing in what precedes

or follows in this chapter, nor, indeed in any of the previous chapters, which could be regarded as referring even in the most indirect manner to Millenarian views of any kind. It would, therefore, be a waste of the space required in this work for the examination of other portions of Scripture which the Millenarians affirm to be decisively in favour of their system, were I to go into any lengthened argument to show that there is no Millenarianism in either, or both conjointly, of the two verses which I have quoted from James.

Though the next verse, namely, the ninth, immediately follows the two verses to which I have just called attention, I have thought it better to advert to it in its isolated state, because while there is nothing in the other verses which gives any countenance to Millenarianism, there is enough in this verse, if it stood alone in the Word of God, to demolish the hypothesis that Christ's Second Coming will be to establish a visible kingdom on earth, over which he will personally preside. The verse is as follows :—" Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned : behold, the

Judge standeth before the door.” Now I do maintain that language could not more plainly express the fact than it is expressed in this verse, that Christ’s next coming in person will be to judge the world in the judicial acceptation of the term. The apostle, it will be observed, begins the verse by exhorting those whom he addressed not to grudge one against another; and he enforces his exhortation by warning them that the probable result of their disregarding it would be that they would be condemned. The words might be construed into an injunction from the apostle to those whom he addressed not in any way to wrong one another whether in thought, in word, or in deed; admonishing them that if they did they would be condemned for their conduct when Christ came to judge the world. I repeat that nothing could be more evident than the fact that Christ is here spoken of as a Judge in the sense of presiding at an assize at which there will be a solemn and impartial inquiry into the conduct of those who shall be arraigned. But if there should be any one whose mind fails to see the words in question in this sense,

I would refer such person to the concluding clause of the verse. "Behold," adds James, "the Judge standeth before the door." Millenarians, however much they may differ among themselves on other points, are all in perfect accord on this point—that when Christ comes to reign personally on earth he will only be a judge in the sense of visiting the ungodly with heavy providential judgments. But here we are told that he will come as a Judge in the judicial meaning of the word. Men will be tried by him, for that is clearly involved in the expression "lest ye be condemned." No one, even in our courts of law, is condemned without having first had a full and a fair trial; and every Christian would recoil at the thought that our Lord Jesus Christ would condemn or punish any one without his having previously undergone a full and fair trial. Let me, too, here remind my Millenarian brethren, by way of parenthesis, that while they say the saints will not be judged at all, it is here made as manifest as words could make it that they will be judged; for the exhortation and warning were addressed to be-

lievers exclusively. In the first and second verses of the first chapter the apostle intimates that his letter was addressed to “the twelve tribes,” whom he calls “my brethren;” and in the seventh verse of the chapter in which the words under consideration occur he again calls them his “brethren.” But it is not necessary that I should dwell further on this passage of Scripture. I can only repeat what I have already said, that if the three verses in the last chapter of the Epistle of James, to which I have called attention, do not prove that Christ’s Second Coming will be to the general judgment of the world, and not to set up a visible kingdom on earth,—I know of no form of language which could have that effect.

On the Epistles of *Peter* the Millenarians make a somewhat large draught. The first passage they quote from this apostle will be found in the seventh verse of the first chapter of his First Epistle. It is as follows :—“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and

honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ." Here there is nothing which Millenarians have a right to quote as furnishing even a plausible argument on behalf of the personal reign of Christ in our world. "The appearing of Jesus Christ" is an expression which often occurs in the epistles, and which I trust I have succeeded in showing refers to his appearing to judge the world at the last day, and not to set up a visible kingdom on the earth.

Nor have the Millenarians any better ground for extracting support to their system from the next verse, which they quote. "Wherefore," says Peter in the thirteenth verse of the same chapter, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." I can give no answer here, because there is nothing to which I could reply.

The next quotation made by Millenarians is from the fourth chapter of the same First Epistle. "Who shall," says Peter in the fifth verse, "give account to him that is ready to

judge the quick and the dead.” With this quotation the Millenarians couple the seventh verse, which says, “But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” The former verse most manifestly points to the day of general judgment. The words “who shall give account,” with which the verse begins, necessarily involve the idea of an assize, and of legal responsibility. The party giving an “account” is manifestly on his trial before a judge, whose prerogative it is to decide on the case by either acquitting or condemning. Now nothing of this nature will occur at the Second Coming of Christ according to the Millenarian view of his Second Advent; but it will occur on the occasion of the general and final judgment. To the last judgment, therefore, the reference must be made. But if a doubt could have existed on the subject, it would be dispelled by the remainder of the verse, which says, “to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.” It is to a “judge”—that Judge being admitted by our Millenarian brethren themselves to be none other than our Lord—that an

account is to be given. Jesus will on the last day of all sit in solemn and impartial assize on the quick and the dead,—which expression obviously includes the whole human race, and at the same time implies that the judgment of both classes—the righteous and the wicked—will be simultaneous, and not, as Millenarians say, with an interval of a thousand years between them.

I maintain, with the utmost confidence in the correctness of my conclusion, that so far from supporting the Millenarian view of Christ's Second Coming, this passage of Scripture is utterly subversive of that system. I might, therefore, omit all reference to the seventh verse as being unnecessary. Still, as that verse is so strongly corroborative of the view I have taken of the verse on which I have been remarking, it may be well to glance for a moment at what its purport is. "But," says the seventh verse, "the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." "The end of all things." That expression cannot apply to the coming of Christ to reign personally on earth. The world is to

go on, according to the admission of the great majority of Millenarians themselves, in much the same way after the advent of our Lord to reign visibly on our planet as it did before. The sun will run his daily race; the moon will walk the firmament above our heads in all her midnight majesty; and the stars will shine as brightly in the places which they now occupy in our system as they do at present. The earth, too, will be substantially the same as it now is. Seed time and harvest, and winter and summer will follow each other in the same regular succession as at present. The human race will be born, marry, and die as they now do. I say, therefore, while such will be the case, that the advent of Christ to our world to commence his Millennial reign in it will not be such an event as to justify the words of Peter—"the end of all things." That is so obviously at variance with the fact that there is no measure to my marvel that intelligent men should be found, and in large numbers too, to seriously maintain that such a construction of the brief passage in question is in accordance with a sound interpretation of

Scripture. But the words will apply to the general judgment. Then, indeed, will have come "the end of all things," so far as relates to this world; for the heavens, as we are told in another part of the writings of the same apostle, shall then pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the earth, and all things that are therein shall be burnt up. It is then, as I believe, all but demonstrable, that it is to the day of our Lord's coming to the general judgment, not to his Millennial coming, that the Apostle Peter here refers. Supposing any Millenarian wished to express the fact in his own language, that the world, in the ordinary sense of the words, will come to an end, could he, let me ask all my Millenarian brethren, employ any language which would more forcibly or explicitly accomplish his object? I know of no form of words which could be better adapted for the purpose.

There is another passage in the third chapter of Peter's Second Epistle, beginning at the seventh and ending with the thirteenth verse, which Millenarians quote with as much confi-

dence as if it declared in so many express words that when Christ comes a second time, it will be to reign personally on earth for a period of a thousand years. Referring to the flood of Noah as having swept away the entire race of mankind, with the exception of Noah and his family, Peter goes on to say, "But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy

conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

I marvel much that any intelligent student of Scripture could doubt that the meaning of the apostle was other than that which the church of Christ has attached to it ever since Jesus left our earth and entered into his glory. The day of judgment spoken of in the seventh verse is obviously the closing day of this world's existence; for first it will be observed that the heavens and the earth are to be reserved by the word or the power of God until that day, in order that they may be then destroyed by fire. That an universal conflagration of our world is the meaning of the apostle in this verse, is admitted by the great majority of Millenarians themselves. It is the same fire, that is here alluded to, as that to which Peter refers in the twelfth verse, to which I will presently advert, and which can-

not, without doing violence to the manifest meaning of words, be interpreted in any other way than as pointing to the day of general judgment. In further confirmation of this construction of the seventh verse, it will be observed that "the day of judgment" there spoken of by the apostle, is in the very next clause of the verse stated to be the day "of perdition of ungodly men." "Perdition," as every enlightened reader of God's Word is aware, means the loss through all eternity of the person to whom the words are applied. Judas was called "the son of perdition," meaning that his betrayal of his Lord and Master involved him in utter and irretrievable ruin. Paul had the idea of eternal punishment in his mind when he said, "But we are not of those who draw back unto perdition." The conclusion of the sentence is, "But of those who believe unto the salvation of the soul." As the salvation here spoken of was eternal salvation, so no less obviously was the perdition eternal perdition. Now no Millenarian, so far as I am aware, certainly no Millenarian of note, entertains the idea that when Christ

comes a second time to our earth to establish a visible kingdom on it, whose affairs shall be administered personally by himself, he will, contemporaneously with his advent, doom "ungodly men" to eternal "perdition." That would, of necessity, involve the extinction of all the workers of iniquity then in our world. But Millenarians do not make this a part of their faith. All they say is, that at Christ's Second Coming to reign on the earth, judgments will be inflicted on the ungodly. As, consequently, "the day of judgment," spoken of in the verse under consideration, relates to the day on which the wicked will be visited with eternal perdition, Millenarians have no right to quote the passage in support of their system.

But I now come to the tenth verse, which is in complete accord with the view I have taken of the seventh verse. If I have expressed my amazement at the Millennial rendering of several passages of Scripture to which I have previously adverted, that amazement reaches its climax when I find Millenarians confidently claiming confirmation of

their views in relation to the coming of Christ to reign personally on earth, from this portion of Holy Writ. What I have just said in adverting to a previous verse, as to the impossibility of finding a form of language which could more forcibly or explicitly express the great fact of the end of the world, as that phrase is usually understood,—I repeat here, with all the emphasis which I can impart to my words. Our Lord is to come as a “thief in the night.” That phrase has been proved in a former chapter to refer to his coming to judge the world, not to usher in his personal reign on the earth; but in the passage before us, the expression acquires additional force, and consequently gives increased confirmation of the soundness of the construction I have put upon it, by its connection with what follows. “In the which,” adds Peter, that is, in the day of the Lord, “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” Just only reflect on the varied forms in which “the end of all things” is here ex-

pressed. "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise." Does not this phraseology look, of itself, like the present world being in the act of dissolution, the "great noise" being its expiring shriek? "The elements," too, are to "melt with fervent heat." Does not that denote the destruction of all sublunary things? But to make the language still stronger, it is added that "the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." May we not, then, with all confidence challenge one and all of our Millenarian brethren to let us see what more precise or expressive language they could employ to describe the end of the world, if they deem this language of Peter inadequate for the purpose. That the language of Peter should be made to apply to the Coming of Christ to reign personally on the earth during the Millennial period, seems to me such a manifest misinterpretation of Scripture, as has few, if any, parallels in the annals of ecclesiastical controversy.

Millenarians quote two passages from the First General Epistle of *John* as confirmatory of other portions of Scripture relative to their

belief in the personal coming of Christ to reign on the earth. The first is the twenty-eighth verse of the second chapter of the First Epistle. "And now, little children," says John, "abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming." The second passage is the second verse of the third chapter of the same First Epistle. "Beloved," says the apostle, "now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." It must be manifest to every reader not biassed by previously formed opinions, that there is no warrant for employing either of these passages as arguments to prove the coming of Christ to reign personally in our world. To put that construction on them is simply assumption. On the other hand, we are warranted in concluding that they refer to our Lord's coming to judge the world finally, because, as I trust I have satisfactorily shown, many other portions of Scripture which refer to Christ's coming on

the day of general judgment, are expressed in precisely similar phraseology.

Jude's epistle is very brief, consisting of only one chapter, but it contains one passage on which Millenarians set great store. "And," says Jude, in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses, "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." That Jude does not here refer to the advent of Christ in the Millenarian sense of his coming to our earth, but that the reference is to his coming to judge the whole world finally, are two propositions as capable of proof as anything not absolutely and self-evidently certain can be. It will be observed that in the first clause of the fifteenth verse, it is said that our Lord's advent will be for the purpose of executing "judgment upon *all*." The Book of Enoch, if any such there

ever was, has long been lost. One, in the second and third centuries, which professed to be that of Enoch, was in circulation. Tertulian, if not formally recognising it as canonical, spoke of it with esteem, but it was rejected by Origen and Jerome, and indeed by the church generally. It is, therefore, supposed that Jude referred to a tradition, but to one that embodied the truth, when he quoted the two verses in question as having been written by Enoch. But be this as it may, the passage as quoted by Jude is to be received as a portion of the inspired volume. Well, then, if Enoch said that the Lord was to come with ten thousand of his saints to execute judgment upon all, the interpretation of the passage is plain. It evidently refers to Christ's coming to the general judgment. As judgment is to be executed on *all*, I do not see how any one can render the words in such a way as to make them say, that the coming of the Lord here spoken of means only that he is coming to visit the ungodly with temporal judgment. The righteous are evidently included in the "all." This view is further confirmed by the words in

the beginning of the fifteenth verse, "All that are ungodly *among* them." So that all are not ungodly on whom the Lord is to come to execute judgment. And as there are only two classes into which all mankind are divided, those who are not ungodly "among them" must be the righteous. They will be judged, or tried, but only to be acquitted. On the other hand, the wicked will be tried, condemned, and punished. That it is of a universal assize, or judicial procedure, that Jude here speaks, appears to me so plain that I should have thought it impossible for any intelligent, unprejudiced reader to come to any other conclusion. There is one word in the passage which should of itself have sufficed to preclude the possibility of putting a Millenarian construction upon it. I allude to the word, "convince," in the connection in which it stands. All that are ungodly, the apostle tells us, are to be *convinced*. The word "convinced," as here employed, is equivalent to the word "convicted" in our courts of criminal jurisprudence. And a conviction in our courts, every one knows, necessarily pre-

supposes an ample and impartial trial. It is, therefore, clear, according to all the recognised principles of logic, that it is to the day of general and final judgment, and not to temporal judgments to be inflicted on the ungodly, according to Millenarian views, that the Apostle Jude refers in that part of his epistle to which we have been adverting.

CHAPTER X.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST—WHAT THE APOCALYPSE SAYS ON THE SUBJECT, AND ON MILLENARIAN MATTERS GENERALLY.

I now come to the Book of *Revelation*, which is that portion of Scripture on which the Millenarians chiefly rest their system, taken as a whole. It is, indeed, almost, if not altogether, the one on which they exclusively ground their belief in a first resurrection and the personal reign of Christ on earth for a thousand years. It may, therefore, be well, before I apply myself to an examination of those portions of it which Millenarians quote in support of their views regarding the Second Coming of Christ, to make some general observations regarding the book as a whole.

My object in this will be that we may be the

better able to arrive at a correct conception of the value of its testimony on matters connected with the Millenarian question generally; for, as I shall show in my next and concluding volume, Millenarians ground their views *exclusively* as to some phases of the Millennial question, and mainly in the majority of those phases, on the utterances of the Book of Revelation. It is, therefore, important that I should, in adverting to what the Apocalypse says regarding the Second Coming of Christ, avail myself of the opportunity which thus presents itself, of making such miscellaneous observations on that book, as will enable the reader to form, as far as may be, a right view of its scope and character.

First of all, it may be right to remark that our most distinguished Biblical critics are not agreed as to the period at which it was written. Some eminent ecclesiastical scholars are of opinion that it was penned during the persecutions of Nero, either in the year 67 or 68. But the general opinion among the best authorities on the subject is, that it was written in the year 94 or 95, during the reign

of the Emperor Domitian. This was the almost unanimous conviction of the Fathers in the third century, and has been almost universally accepted as the right one by all the best Biblical scholars since their day.

There has, too, been a diversity of sentiment among learned theologians as to who the author was. According to Dr. Adam Clarke, this is a question in modern times, as it was among the Fathers of the third and fourth centuries. Dr. Clarke does not mention the names of any eminent modern divines, who have doubts of the authorship of the Apocalypse, and, I confess, I do not know any work of recent date in which doubts are thrown on the authorship of John. Among the earlier Christians, there were theologians of note who ascribed the penmanship of the work to an Ephesian, called John the Presbyter, who, they assert, was altogether different from John the Apostle. For this hypothesis, I have not seen any reasonable ground,—none which could bear a moment's examination. Others attribute the authorship of the book to Cerinthus, who lived towards the close of

the first century. This hypothesis, like the other, rests on no grounds worthy of a moment's consideration. Cerinthus was a heretic of the worst kind. He denied the divinity of Christ, and, as a natural consequence, the atonement; whereas it is evident, beyond all question, that the writer of the Revelation believed in the co-equality and co-eternity of Christ with God the Father, and in the atoning and sanctifying efficacy of his blood. I wonder, indeed, that any one who receives the book at all as of Divine authority, should doubt that it was at least written by some one bearing the name of John, because that fact is distinctly stated in the very first verse of the first chapter, and repeated in the fourth verse. Nor can I discover any ground whatever for doubting that the John here spoken of was the Apostle John. There are various phrases which occur in the Book of Revelation which are to be met with in the Gospel of John. Christ is in both books called "the Word of God," a phrase which occurs in none of the other books of the New Testament. The expression, too, "bear re-

cord," is to be met with in the Apocalypse and in the evangelical narrative by the Apostle John,—which phrase is nowhere else to be found in the writings of any other of the New Testament penmen. I hold, therefore, that the authorship of the Book of Revelation is demonstrably to be ascribed to the beloved disciple of our Lord, he who "bare record" to the life and death of Jesus. In confirmation of the belief that John was the author of the book, it ought to be mentioned, that Justin Martyr, who lived about sixty years after it was written, ascribes the authorship in the most confident manner to the Apostle John. For the first two centuries, indeed, no one ever controverted the fact of his being the writer.

But the authenticity of the Apocalypse, as well as its authorship, has been disputed. "The Apocalypse," says Calmet, in his valuable work on the Bible, "was not at all times, nor in all churches, admitted as canonical. Jerome, Amphilochius, and Sulpitius Severus, remark, that in their time many churches in Greece did not receive it. It is not in the catalogues of the Council of Laodicea, or of

Cyril of Jerusalem.” But it was received as canonical by all the Fathers of the third and fourth centuries, and has been so ever since by distinguished divines of all denominations. Here it is right to remark that many modern Millenarians take credit to themselves for the assumption that we owe it entirely to the Millenarian Fathers that a place has been secured among the canonical books of the New Testament for the Apocalypse. But for them, we are gravely told, the Book of Revelation would have been rejected as uninspired, and as, consequently, only to be classed among the apocryphal writings which were so common in the second and third centuries. The assumption—or rather, I should say, assertion—is at variance with the accredited ecclesiastical annals of that period. The anti-Millenarians were as ready to assign a place to the Apocalypse among the canonical books as the Millenarians. It is well known that among those who earnestly contended for the inspiration and authenticity of the Revelation, were Origen and Jerome; and these two celebrated Fathers were amongst the greatest oppo-

nents of Millenarianism of whom we have any account in the ecclesiastical histories of Mosheim, Milner, or Neander, relative to the Patristic period of the Church's annals.

With regard to the scope of the Book of Revelation, none of my readers need to be informed that there ever has been, and is still as much as at any former period, an almost infinite diversity of opinion. I have stated in my first volume the humbling, and, indeed, in some respects, absolutely painful fact, that no fewer than about 1,200 works have been published with a view to explain either the whole or part of the Book of Revelation, and yet that not any two of the authors of these 1,200 works can be found to agree in all points with each other relative to this mysterious book. This fact, as I have before stated, I ascertained by inspection of that portion of the catalogue in the British Museum which relates to the subject. Since then I have carefully consulted "The Cyclopædia Bibliographica," compiled and published by Mr. James Darling, of Little Queen Street, Lincoln's Inn Fields, which contains a list of about an equal number of books on the

Apocalypse, with many useful explanatory or illustrative notes, written on the same plan as the other portions of "The Cyclopædia Bibliographica," and which render that work—the result of a vast amount of labour and research—one of very great value.

It is truly distressing to think that among the numberless theories which have been advanced with a view to explain the meaning of the Revelation, many of the most startling, and on the very face of things the most unreasonable, should owe their existence and advocacy to men of transcendent talent, and possessing a thorough knowledge of Scripture,—men too, on all other subjects, of sound judgment and of great sobriety both as regards their sentiments and their mode of expressing them. It does not comport with the object of this work to advert to these great and manifold diversities of opinion. Suffice it to say in general terms, that the writers on the Apocalypse have, for the most part, been divided into three classes,—the Præterist, the part-Præterist, and the Futurist. The Præterist portion of the expositors of the Book

of Revelation lay down this general principle—that the greater part of the prophecies contained in that book have had their fulfilment in the earlier ages of Christianity,—a large proportion of them before and at the destruction of Jerusalem. Among our most eminent writers on prophecy who have written in accordance with this conviction may be mentioned the names of Grotius, Bossuet, Hammond, Calmet, Wetstein, Ewald, Lee, and Moses Stuart. The latter has written elaborately and with great learning and ability in favour of his views.

But there is a second class of prophetic writers who concur to a certain extent in the views I have mentioned, but who make considerable additions to them. They believe that while many of the prophecies contained in the Apocalypse have been fulfilled, many others, and those of great importance, remain to be accomplished, and will not be fully so until the sound of the last trumpet is heard. Among the most eminent writers who have advocated this theory, it may suffice to name Mede, Sir Isaac Newton, Vitranga, Bishop

Newton, Thomas Scott the commentator, Dean Woodhouse, Mr. Frere, who is still alive, though considerably beyond his eightieth year; Mr. Elliott, Dr. Keith, Dr. Cumming, &c. This class of writers on the Apocalypse may be regarded as belonging in a modified sense to what is called the part-Præterist school.

The great distinctive feature of the Futurist students of prophecy, is their firm conviction that all the predictions in both the Old and New Testament ceased with the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews, and will not be resumed till the Second Coming of Christ. The voice of prophecy does not, they say, even so much as breathe a whisper relative to the events, however momentous they may be, between the long interval, already not much less than two thousand years, between the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming of Christ. The Præterist school of prophetic students are partly Millenarian and partly not; but the Futurists are all, to a man, firm believers in the personal pre-Millennial coming of our Lord. Nearly all the Præterists regard the Pope, or Popery as a system, as

Antichrist ; none of the Futurists do. They all believe in a personal monarch yet to come as the Antichrist. The Præterists believe in what is called the year-day scheme of prophetic interpretation,—that is, that the 1,260 days mentioned in the Apocalypse mean 1,260 years. The Futurists, with one consent, reject this idea, and hold that the 1,260 days are days of twenty-four hours each, and that consequently when their personal Antichrist comes, he will reign only three years and a half. There can be no question that this was the view generally, if not universally, entertained by the Fathers of the first four centuries. Neither can it be denied that it has of late made rapid progress among the students of prophecy. Among its ablest advocates, about thirty years ago, were the late Dr. T. R. Maitland, Mr. Charles Maitland, author of “The Church in the Catacombs,” and other works; and the Rev. Mr. Burgh. Its advocates now are numerous and able. To run over a list of their names would occupy too much of our space. It may suffice to mention those of Dr. Tregelles, Mr.

Benjamin Wills Newton, the Rev. R. Govett, the Rev. Capel Molyneux, the Rev. Dr. Leask, &c. The views of this class of Millenarians are still making rapid progress. They promise, indeed, to be, before long, in a majority over the adherents of the Præterist hypothesis. The ablest and most elaborate work which has been written in favour of this view of the Apocalyptic teachings is one which appeared, nearly a quarter of a century ago, from the pen of Mr. Govett, under the title of "The Revelation of St. John, Literal and Future: being an Exposition of that Book; to which are added Remarks in Refutation of the Ideas that the Pope is the Man of Sin, and that Popery is the Apostacy predicted by St. Paul, with special reference to Dr. O'Sullivan on the Apostacy,"—a work which, like most other works from Mr. Govett's pen, is published by Nisbet and Co.

With regard to the difficulties which have attended every attempt which has hitherto been made to explain the Apocalypse, perhaps no better illustration of the point could be given than is furnished in the fact that not

only has there always been, as there still is, an endless diversity of sentiment respecting the more striking portions of the book, but that directly opposite systems of faith have been based upon the views entertained. Every one knows that the great majority of our most able commentators have regarded the Antichrist and the Man of Sin, so often spoken of in its pages, as the Pope, or Church of Rome; and yet many of the most eminent adherents of the Church of Rome have maintained, and still maintain, that so far from meaning their religion, the Antichrist, or the Man of Sin of the Revelation, is the Protestant religion, and that its entire and final destruction is that which is to be accomplished by the breathing of Christ's mouth. Some learned and able treatises have at various times been published with the view of establishing this theory. One which excited great attention for many years, was written by Dr. Warmesley, a Roman Catholic divine of Bath, and vicar-apostolic of the West of England. This work was published in 1771, and had for its object to prove not only that Luther was the Antichrist, and Protestantism "the grand

apostacy," but that Protestantism would be entirely destroyed in 1825, and Roman Catholicism become the universal religion of the world. I need not add that the close of the year 1825 witnessed the explosion of Dr. Warmesley's theory. Some Protestant writers, also grounding their conclusions on the interpretation which they put on particular portions of the Apocalypse, have been equally presumptuous with this Popish divine, in fixing dates for the accomplishment of great events. Nor have they been more fortunate. I have referred in my first volume to the fact that eighteen years ago, I myself heard Dr. Cumming, in the presence of five thousand people, declare, in Exeter Hall, that the world would and must come to an end, by being burnt up, within four years from that date. Fourteen years have since passed away, and the world, in all its material aspects and relations, stands exactly as it then did. The Rev. James Bicheno, an expositor of prophetic Scripture, who in other respects still stands high in the estimation of the religious world, confidently predicted early in the present cen-

ture the complete downfall of Popery, and of despotism of all kinds, as destined to occur in 1819. Unhappily both are well-nigh as rampant as ever. In some countries, indeed, they are more so. Even within the last few years, the Rev. M. Baxter fixed a given year for the destruction of Antichrist, in the person of Louis Napoleon. That year has passed away and Louis Napoleon still lives. Mr. Baxter, however, nothing discouraged by the failure of his first prediction respecting the doom of Antichrist, in the person of Louis Napoleon, has ventured with no less confidence on another prophecy, relating to the same subject. According to the rev. gentleman, Louis Napoleon is in the next or succeeding year to make a seven years' covenant with the Jews, to insure their immediate restoration to their own land, and their protection there during the period I have mentioned. The Jews are accordingly to return to the Holy Land, and at the end of three years and a half, Louis Napoleon is not only to break his covenant with them, but to go out in person to Palestine to fight against them, and then

and there perish in the attempt to destroy the Jews.

My object in referring to these facts is not to dissuade from the study of the Apocalypse, but simply to impress on the minds of my readers, as I would wish to impress on my own mind, that, seeing such diversified, and in many instances such directly antagonist conclusions have been come to by those who have carefully and prayerfully read the Revelation,—we should all be anxious to avoid dogmatism in relation to our own views, and watchful that we be not guilty of a want of charity towards those who have adopted notions at variance with our own.

I have, within the last few months, had a striking and affecting illustration afforded me of the darkness and doubt which envelop much of the Apocalypse, and of the consequent danger of being over-confident in the soundness of the conclusions to which we may have come as the result of our inquiries as to its meaning. Probably among those who, in the present generation, have belonged, or now belong, to the Præterist school of prophetic students, no

man has written at greater length, or with more zeal, learning, and ability, than the Rev. P. S. Desprez, a clergyman of the Church of England, near Salisbury. His work, entitled "The Apocalypse Fulfilled," displays a great amount of research, and reached a second edition. I am personally acquainted with some eminent Biblical scholars who, believing that Mr. Desprez's theory that the prophecies in the Revelation were all fulfilled by the destruction of Jerusalem, was right, have publicly avowed and strenuously advocated that theory. Imagine what must be the disappointment of such persons, and of all of his readers who may have been convinced by his reasonings, when I mention that Mr. Desprez has totally abjured, from beginning to end of his elaborate work, all that he has written in favour of a theory which for many years he cherished with all the tenderness of a paternal heart. A mutual friend, formerly editor of the *Journal of Sacred Literature*, having written to Mr. Desprez that I was engaged in the study of Millenarian matters with a view to publication, he wrote me a letter in relation

to my forthcoming work, giving me permission to make what use of it I thought fit. In this communication there are some things which I do not deem it expedient to publish, because they would have a tendency to unsettle men's minds on various aspects of Divine revelation. But so far as Mr. Desprez's letter regards the study of the Apocalypse, I may quote a few words from it. I do so the more readily because it bears out the view which I am endeavouring to induce others to adopt,—viz., that we should be exceeding watchful against undue confidence in our own opinions of that book, and very charitable towards those who differ from the conclusions to which we have come. Mr. Desprez, among other things which he says in his letter to me, expresses himself in this wise :—" I have given some attention to this subject"—the Apocalypse—" for the last twenty years : have gone through in the earnest search after truth, many phases of opinion, and *now* think that everything I have written on the subject is more or less *wrong*." This is a sad admission to be constrained to make ; but sadder—much sadder still are other admissions

which are contained in Mr. Desprez's letter. Only let my readers try to realise in their own minds what must have been the anguish which Mr. Desprez must have experienced when forced to the conclusion, that the theory explanatory of the Apocalypse, which he had so long and so fondly cherished, and to the establishment of which he had devoted years of study, and on which he had expended an amount of learned research which commanded the admiration even of those who dissented from his views,—was entirely groundless. It must, indeed, have been with a heavy heart, that he thus saw the arduous labour of twenty years not only thrown away, but expended in the effort to establish a theory which he has been brought to see to be at once groundless and injurious both to the interests of religion and of society.

I might, but will not, quote the experiences of other eminent authors, who have confidently theorised on the subject of the Apocalypse, and who have afterwards seen reason to renounce their theories under circumstances of deep humiliation.

I have not, I am sure I need not say, any

sympathy with those who not only maintain, as many do, that because the Apocalypse is so full of mystery, arising from its allegorical character, we ought not to endeavour to comprehend it, but ridicule those who do. Dr. South, an eminent divine of the seventeenth century, was one who sought to be witty at the expense of the book, and of those who devoted a portion of their time to the study of its pages. Speaking of such persons, he was in the habit of remarking, that the Book of Revelation either found them mad or made them so. This was, to say the least, a profane observation. It was a reflection on the wisdom and goodness of God; for he does nothing that is not wise and good,—though the wisdom and the goodness embodied in some particular act may not, for a season, be seen by us. My views as to the study of the Apocalypse accord in the main with those expressed by Sir Isaac Newton, author of a valuable work on the Revelation, and those of Dr. Adam Clarke. Both those eminent men were fully persuaded that though the purport of some prophecies may be learnt from diligent and prayerful

study, yet that others will never be understood until the light of their accomplishment has been thrown upon them. Speaking of a particular prophecy Sir Isaac Newton says : “ It is a part of this prophecy that it should not be understood before the last age of the world, and therefore it makes for the credit of the prophecy, that it is not yet understood. The folly of interpreters has been to foretell times and things by this prophecy, as if God designed to make them prophets. By this rashness they have not only exposed themselves, but brought the prophecy also into contempt. The design of God was much otherwise. He gave this and the prophecies of the Old Testament, not to gratify men’s curiosities by enabling them to foreknow things, but that after they were fulfilled they might be interpreted by the events; and his own providence, not the interpreters, be then manifested thereby to the world; and there is already so much of the prophecy fulfilled, that as many as will take pains in this study may see sufficient instances of God’s providence.”

Dr. Adam Clarke, in his introduction to the

Apocalypse, after referring to all that he had read and thought on the subject, and his attention to the important events which had taken place in his day, concludes in these remarkable words:—"Viewing all these things I feel myself at perfect liberty to state that to my apprehension all these prophecies"—the prophecies in the Revelation—"have been misapplied and misapprehended, and that the KEY to them is not yet intrusted to the sons of men. My readers will therefore excuse me from any exposure of my ignorance or folly by attempting to do what many with much more wisdom and learning have attempted, and what every man to the present day has failed in who has preceded me in expositions of this book. I have no other mountain to heap on those already piled up; and if I had I have not strength to lift it; those who have courage may again make the trial: already we have had a sufficiency of vain efforts."

Such was the language in which this learned and able commentator on the Word of God expressed himself in reference to the failures which have attended all attempts to explain

the Apocalypse. Upwards of thirty-four years have passed away since he so expressed himself. In the interval many additional volumes have been written on the Revelation,* but with no greater success than attended the labours of those authors who had written previous to the date of the above extract from

* Just as I had finished the remaining manuscript of the volume now in the reader's hand, I received a copy of a new work on the Apocalypse. It is entitled, "A Commentary on the Revelation of St. John," and is from the pen of the Rev. T. Garratt, Minister of Trinity Church, Lincoln's Inn Fields, and author of "The Midnight Cry." The volume is written in an excellent spirit, displays great research, and is in every respect an able production. Mr. Garratt makes repeated references to my first volume, and to some of these I hope to be able to advert in my next and concluding volume. In the mean time, I cannot help remarking that Mr. Garratt, who is a zealous Millenarian, does me, on one point, a great, though, I am sure, an unintentional injustice. He represents me as having written a chapter *against* the "Literal Interpretation of Scripture." Now all the readers of my former volume know that such is not the fact. I would recoil at the idea that no portion of Scripture is to be understood literally. It is, on the contrary, my firm conviction that the great bulk of the blessed Book which constitutes a revelation of the mind and will of God to man, is to be received in accordance with the literal interpretation principle. Yet I am held up, inferentially, by Mr. Garratt, as the counterpart of Mr. Molyneux and other Millenarians,—they holding that *all* Scripture is to be interpreted literally, and I that *none* is to be so understood.

Dr. Adam Clarke's introduction to the Apocalypse. And yet, strange to say, all the authors of the 1,200 works which have thus been written on that portion of Scripture, have been more or less confident—many of them as much so as if a special revelation from heaven had been vouchsafed to them on the subject—that their respective expositions were thoroughly Scriptural and consequently sound.

I have thus adverted at considerable length to the Apocalypse, because, as I have before said, the Millenarians draw the great majority of their arguments in favour of their system in all its diversified phases, from that book. And if I have succeeded in showing that the Revelation contains in a pre-eminent sense "things" not only "hard," but with our present feeble lights impossible "to be understood," it follows that the Millenarian edifice, so far as its foundations lie in that book, are most insecure. This fact, I feel assured, I shall be able to make clear from an examination in my next chapter of those portions of the book to which Millenarians attach the greatest importance.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST—WHAT THE APOCALYPSE SAYS ON THE SUBJECT, AND ON MILLENARIAN MATTERS GENERALLY.

(*Concluded.*)

HAVING made the preceding preliminary observations of a general character respecting the last book in the New Testament, let us now apply ourselves to a consideration of its utterances on the special subject of this chapter. Millenarians fancy they can find in it numerous passages which more or less directly sanction that part of their system which relates to the Second Coming of Christ personally to establish a visible kingdom in this world. If I were to examine in detail all those parts of this book in which they say they more or less clearly see the personal reign of Christ on our earth for a period of a thousand years, I would

require more space for the purpose than is allotted to this volume. But as much of what they regard as evidence in favour of their views is admitted to be indirect or merely inferential, I am thereby spared the necessity of extending, in this chapter, my examination of the alleged Millenarian portions of this closing book of the Bible, to any inconvenient length. My observations will be less lengthened because I shall, when I come to speak of the first and second resurrections, and the nature of Christ's Millennial kingdom on earth, have to advert by implication to the Second Coming of Christ to our world,—which is the subject especially under consideration now. Besides, I have in previous parts of my work, already shown—I trust satisfactorily to my readers—that some of the passages on which Millenarians lay the greatest stress, do not apply to the Second Coming of Christ, according to their notions, but that they are meant by the Holy Spirit to apply alone to the advent of Christ, when he shall come to our world to judge all mankind at the last day. The seventh verse in the first chapter of the book, belongs to the category of

those passages which I have already shown to refer to the final judgment of the world. That verse is—"Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." That the reference here is to the day of final and universal judgment, I have given proofs in a previous chapter,—in which I alluded to this verse. It is not, therefore, necessary that I should again advert to the passage in this place. Further reflection, since I wrote what appeared in the passage in a previous part of my work, has only served to satisfy my mind beyond the possibility of doubt or misgiving, that the reference to the advent of Christ made in this passage is not to his coming personally on earth, but to his coming to fulfil the functions of the final Judge of the whole world.

But not content with claiming the passage in question as furnishing strong confirmation of the soundness of their theory of the advent of Christ to reign personally on earth, Millenarians no less confidently maintain that all the announcements made by Christ of his

intended coming, in the messages or warnings which he addressed to the Seven Churches, are so many intimations of his coming to reign personally on earth. Mr. Birks is one of those Millenarians who emphatically insist that the coming there spoken of is a Second Coming to establish a personal kingdom on earth. I am confounded at this. I cannot, I confess, give a sufficiently emphatic expression to the amazement which I feel at seeing these messages or warnings to the Seven Churches appropriated by Millenarians as portions of Scripture which refer to the Second Coming of Christ personally to establish a visible kingdom in our world. If they could be made to subserve that end, no one could have any faith in the meaning of Scripture. It is a remarkable fact, that there is some expression in each of the messages to the Seven Churches which places beyond all doubt that, instead of Christ's coming personally to establish a Millennial kingdom on earth being meant, the coming of our Lord to which the allusion is made is that of his coming in providence.

In speaking of and to the Church at Ephe-

sus, our Lord says in the fourth and fifth verses of the second chapter of the Revelation, "Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent." Here the Church of Ephesus is called to repent and do its first works as the only conditions on which Christ would agree not to come quickly for the purpose of removing its candlestick out of its place. The meaning of the words is, that unless the members of the Ephesian Church did repent and do their first works, the means of grace would be withdrawn from them. This, surely, is a very different coming from that of coming to erect a Millennial kingdom on earth over which the Lord would preside in person. According to the Millenarian hypothesis, Christ will only come a second time to our earth, so far as relates to his people, to raise the dead saints from their graves, and to take them up with living saints into the air, to be ever with

him there. Now, no one has ever denied, so far as my reading extends, that the Church of Ephesus, notwithstanding all its shortcomings, was a Church of Christ consisting in the main of believers in Jesus; yet we meet with nothing in the passage pointing to their being caught up into the air when Christ shall come, but on the contrary, we are informed that unless they repent and do their first works, the coming of Christ to them will be the removal of their candlestick,—which means their deprivation of their spiritual privileges. A promise is annexed to those that will yet overcome. Christ was to exercise his patience and forbearance yet a little longer with them, whereas when he comes, in the Millenarian sense of the term, there will be an end of the probationary state—an end of the Gospel dispensation.

Still more remarkable, as against the Millenarian notion of Christ's coming being here meant, is the language which he addressed to the Church in Smyrna:—"I know," he says, "thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich), and I know the blasphemy of them

which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." The members of this church are commended by our Lord for their works, and because they bore so well, as believers in his name ought to do, their tribulation and poverty; and then, after warning them that other sufferings and sorrows were in store for them—a "tribulation for ten days"—he exhorts them to be faithful unto death, promising to give them as the reward of their fidelity a crown of life. He further assures them that if they overcome, they shall not be hurt of the second death. Christ came to the Church at Smyrna through his angel, when this message was delivered to them, but that was a very different coming from the Millenarian view of the coming of

Christ; for here they are all warned to prepare for tribulation for “ten days”—a definite for an indefinite period—while some of them were to be cast into prison that they might be tried; whereas the Millenarian coming of Christ is to take those of his people who are alive instantaneously up into the air, to be for ever with him in a glorified state.

To the angel of the Church at Pergamos John was instructed by his Lord to write as follows:—“These things saith he which hath the sharp sword with two edges. I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satan’s seat is: and thou holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth. But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, which thing I hate. Repent; or

else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."

In this passage we distinctly recognise again the disciples of Christ. He had a "few things against" them, but the root of the matter was nevertheless in them, for they held fast his name, and had not denied the faith. He exhorts them to repent because of the sins that were to be found among them, and warns them that if they do not he will come against them quickly, and fight against them with the sword of his mouth. Who could have expected to discover Millenarianism here? Yet Millenarians do. Just only let the reader carefully digest what Mr. Birks says on this passage. After quoting the words "Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and fight against thee with the sword of my mouth," Mr. Birks goes on to say, "Here it expressly denotes a judgment on impenitent professors, the counterparts of Balaam, who was slain with the sword, while succouring the enemies of God. Hence these words, as well as those which follow, denote plainly the close of the day of

grace, and the exercise of solemn and righteous judgment on the impenitent and the ungodly. They answer to the statement of the prophet, 'He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.' The door of mercy has been closed, and the hour of open judgment has come."

If instead of quoting Mr. Birks' words from his "Outlines of Unfulfilled Prophecy," I had merely given in my own the substance of what Mr. Birks said, I would have been suspected of having unconsciously given an inaccurate representation of his sentiments. It would not have been believed that he could ever have for a moment entertained, much less deliberately penned, the passage which I have quoted. The very transparency of the misconstruction renders it all the more difficult to deal with it, for every one who has been engaged in controversy must have found that he has never felt so embarrassed as when called on to reply to a proposition or opinion of an opponent, which on the very face of it was at entire variance with the fact.

Mr. Birks interprets the words I have quoted to denote plainly "the close of the day of grace and the exercise of solemn and righteous judgment on the impenitent and ungodly." This is but another mode of expressing the Millenarian sentiment of Christ's coming personally to establish his Millennial reign on earth; for "the close of the day of grace" is always synonymous in the Millenarian vocabulary with the end of the present age, or of the Gospel dispensation. That event, I need not say, is to be universal all over the world. But the coming of Christ here spoken of was purely local. It was only to the members of the Church at Pergamos that he was to come. Besides, his coming was only to be conditional. It was to be contingent on the fact as to whether they repented or not, "Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth," were the words of our Lord. If the Church at Pergamos listened to the exhortation which he addressed to them, and repented of "the few things" which he had against them, he was not to come to them at

all in the way of judgment. He gave them time to repent. How long that time was, we do not know. But how utterly unlike is all this to what, according to Millenarians, is to take place at the Second Coming of Christ to reign personally on earth! He will not thus specifically warn the impenitent of his impending approach. He will not urge them to repent. He will give them no time for repentance, much less make his coming contingent on the fact as to whether they repent or not. He will then come—still speaking in Millenarian language—when least expected by the ungodly, instead of their being prepared for his approach. He will come like a thief in the night, and visit them with sudden destruction. But I will say no more. I really feel as if I were offering an affront to the understandings of my readers, in seriously controverting the Millenarian notion, that the passage in question relates to the Second Coming of Christ to establish his Millennial rule in our world.

Against the Church of Thyatira also our Lord had “a few things,” although it abounded in

Christian graces and works. His great complaint against the members of that church was that they “suffered that woman Jezebel” to remain among them, although they knew the sins of which she was guilty. But even with regard to her and those who were partakers with her of her sins, Jesus was only to visit them with “great tribulation,” if they persisted in refusing to repent of their deeds. He allowed them a space for repentance. This is wholly in antagonism with the Millenarian view of the Second Coming of Christ. There will be no time allowed to the wicked for repentance then—not even a single moment. The most terrible judgments are to be poured out on the impenitent contemporaneously with the Lord’s descent from heaven. But that this message of Christ, through the medium of the angel, to the Church at Thyatira, had no reference to his coming personally to our earth to establish his Millennial reign upon and over it, is further demonstrable from the fact that he adds, after mentioning the judgments which were to be inflicted on Jezebel, “And all the churches shall know that I am he that searcheth

the reins and hearts.” There are still, therefore, to be churches on the earth after all this has happened—a fact which of itself proves that this could not be a coming of Christ in the Millenarian acceptation of the phrase, for according to the Millenarians, as I have had so often to repeat, all the living saints are to be caught up into the air to meet the Lord when he comes, and to be ever with him there.

To the angel of the Church in Sardis John was commissioned by his Lord and Master to write, saying that he knew its works, and that it had a name that it lived, and yet was dead. The message proceeds:—“Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.”

This could not mean, according to the Millennial theory, the end of the age or of the dispensation, or, to use the words of Mr. Birks,

the close of the day of grace, and of the hour of judgment having come, because the members of the Sardis Church were first of all exhorted to be watchful, and to strengthen the things which remained that were ready to die. This proves that they were still to be permitted to continue for some time longer in a probationary state. And the further exhortation which follows equally establishes the same fact. "Remember, therefore," it is added, "how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent." So that, so far from, according to the belief of Mr. Birks and other Millenarians, the day of grace, or mercy, having closed, "and the hour of judgment come," an opportunity was still afforded to the members of this church, who were spiritually in a dying or greatly decayed state, to repent and reform. But if they disregarded the counsels of their Lord, and did not watch and repent, he warned them that he would come upon them as a thief, and they should not know at what hour he would come. Anything more unlike Millenarianism than all this, it would be impossible to conceive.

The message to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia was, that Jesus knew its works, that its members had a little strength, and had kept his word, and had not denied his name; and that his and their enemies should be made to come and worship before their feet. To show that he loved them, Jesus further says:—"Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth." Here, again, instead of the close of the day of grace, or the end of the Gospel dispensation, which all Millenarians regard as synchronous with the personal Advent of Christ to establish a visible kingdom on earth, we have a prolongation of the probationary state—in other words, a continuance of the day of grace, or a perpetuation of the Gospel dispensation for an indefinite period.

The message to the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans is the most awful of the messages sent to the Seven Churches. "I know," said the Saviour, "thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou

wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth." The latter are awful words to come from the lips of the loving Saviour of mankind. And had he ended there, the doom of the Church of the Laodiceans must have been dreadful indeed. But he mercifully adds, after reproving them for their pride and ignorance, and self-deception, in supposing and saying that they were rich and increased with goods, and had need of nothing, and knew not that they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,—“I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.”

It may be right to guard here against a possible misconception on a point of great importance. It might be supposed by those who do not thoroughly understand the Gospel scheme of salvation, from the expression, “Buy of me gold that thou mayest be rich,”—that

mankind were required to do something in the way of good works to entitle them to the gold that maketh rich. As regards those who know the Gospel scheme, it is not necessary to say a single word in the way of caution, but, if not for their sakes, for the sake of others less highly privileged, it is desirable I should mention that the word “buy,” as employed in this passage, simply means to accept gratefully that which is offered generously and freely,—just as it is said in the first verse of the fifty-fifth chapter of Isaiah—“Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, *buy* wine and milk without *money* and without *price*.”

Here, still, we find mankind in a probationary state. The message of Jesus, addressed by John to the Church of the Laodiceans, through the angel of that church, was one of mercy. They were intreated to receive the heavenly and eternal riches, which Jesus was prepared to give them.

This view of the gracious meaning of this message of our Lord is further confirmed by

what follows in the next verse. "As many as I love," continues our Lord, "I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore and repent." This shows that Jesus still regarded the Church of the Laodiceans as his disciples, notwithstanding the lamentable extent to which they had fallen from their first faith, and love, and holy works. It was not in judgment in the sense of wrath, that he was to visit them, but in the way of rebuke and chastening. How very unlike the coming of Christ in the Millenarian sense of the words! When he comes again to our world, it will be to transform and translate all his people, the living and the dead alike, to be with himself in the air, and to pour out his judgments in the way of punishment on the ungodly. How very different is this from the coming of Christ as pointed out in the words of Mr. Birks, when he says that the above language of our Lord means that the day of grace will, at the advent of the period in question, be closed. How much at variance is it with the stereotyped phraseology of Millenarians generally, when they say that the above words of Christ, like those which

had preceded them in the messages to the other six churches, meant that the end of the then present age or of the Gospel dispensation had come.

If it were not for the extraordinary obliquity of vision which leads Millenarians to see in the messages to the Seven Churches the Second Coming of Christ in person to establish a visible kingdom on earth, and the pertinacity with which they insist that such is the only real meaning of the passages in question,—I should not have dwelt on them at so much length. I should have felt that I had done enough in calling my readers' attention to what is said in the twentieth verse of the same third chapter of the Book of Revelation: "Behold," says Christ, "I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." I should like to see how any Millenarian will attempt to reconcile with this his belief that all the preceding parts of this chapter referred to Christ's coming a second time personally to remain and reign on the earth for a thousand years.

Here our Lord is said to have come; he is represented as standing at the door and knocking. This he could not be, nor do, unless he were present. The obvious meaning of the passage is, that our Lord is knocking at the door of men's hearts, asking for admission. But the presence is not personal. He is present by the Holy Spirit, and through the means of grace to be found in the Gospel he seeks to save sinners. "If," he says, in his infinite grace and condescension, "any man will hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

Could, I ask, anything be more at variance than the whole of this and the preceding chapter with the construction which Millenarians put upon them, when they represent them as referring to Christ's Second Coming to reign personally on earth, and consequently as intimating that "the day of mercy has closed, and the hour of judgment come?" As if to prevent the possibility of any such conclusion being come to, our Lord, in every one of his messages to the Seven Churches—even in the

case of the very worst of them—makes use of some expression which clearly proves that an indefinitely prolonged day of probation was still to be allowed them, with the view, and in the hope, that they would repent and “overcome,” and ultimately receive crowns of glory.

I have dwelt thus long on these portions of Revelation to which I have been adverting, because I was desirous of making so clear as that none could fail to perceive it, the lamentable perversions of Scripture to which Millenarians resort and in which they persist, in their zeal to support their theory of a personal reign of Christ on earth.

Passing over various intervening passages, which they with equally little justice press into their service, I now come to the last chapter of the Book of Revelation, and, by consequence, to the concluding chapter of the Word of God. In the seventh verse Jesus says to John, through the medium of the angel with whom the apostle conversed, “Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.” Not only are the Millenarians unanimous in contending that

these words of our Lord constitute a sure foundation on which to rest their faith in his personal reign on earth, but many of their number attach to the words a special importance, because they are repeated in the twentieth verse, and are the last which Jesus, through his apostle, John, addressed to his church on earth. But that the Millenarians are entirely wrong in the conclusion at which they have arrived, that Christ's coming, as alluded to here, means his coming personally to establish a visible kingdom on earth, to last for a thousand years, is an erroneous conclusion,—will be clearly shown by a careful consideration of what precedes the verse. Nothing could be more plain than that all the revelations which the angel had made in the six preceding verses were in relation to celestial matters. The river of the water of life, described, in the first and second verses, as proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, is obviously situated in heaven. The statement in the third verse, that there shall be no more curse, cannot apply to a Millennial state of things, because there will be a large amount of curse on the

earth during the Millennial period. Equally inapplicable to the Millennium, as understood by our Millenarian friends, would be the language in the fifth verse—"There shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun." During the Millennial era night will succeed day, as at present, and the light of the sun will be as much needed then as now. The verse concludes with the words, "and they"—meaning the saints--"shall reign for ever and ever." If I have conclusively shown, as I trust I have, that the angel is here speaking throughout of the saints in glory, their never-ending reign must necessarily be in heaven, not on earth. The only thing which would justify the conclusion that the reign of the saints here spoken of was to be on the earth, would be an explicit statement of the fact that the scene of their regal dominion and glory is destined to be transferred from heaven to earth. But no such explicit statement is here given. Nothing, indeed, is said which any ingenuity, however great, could so construe the passage as to give even a seeming sanction to the idea

of such a transfer. But, besides this, the Millenarian notion of a personal reign of our Lord on earth, as sought to be supported by this portion of Scripture, is shown to be wholly groundless by the words "*for ever and ever.*" The reign here spoken of is thus to be of eternal duration. The fact is made all the more manifest by the repetition of the phrase "*for ever.*" Now, it cannot be said of the personal reign of Christ in our world that it is to be eternal. On the contrary, all Millenarians are agreed on the fact—though their differences of opinion on other aspects of the Millennial question are great and manifold—that so far from the personal reign of Christ in this world being eternal, it will have but the short duration of a thousand years. It is, therefore,—I say it deliberately,—as evident as any moral truth can be, that the reign referred to in this passage of Scripture is a reign in heaven, not on earth. When, consequently, our Lord says, after enumerating the things in question, "*Behold, I come quickly,*" I do not see how any one can doubt that he points to his coming, not to set up a visible

kingdom on earth, but to introduce all believers to the glorious state of things in heaven, which the angel sent by our Lord had, in vision, brought so vividly before the mind of John; while, at the same time, the workers of iniquity would receive their "reward" in the form of an intolerable and eternal punishment.

The last quotation which the Millenarians make in favour of their idea of the personal reign of Christ on earth, will be found in the concluding verse but one of the chapter. It is a repetition, with an addition, of the verse which we have just been considering. "He"—that is, Christ—"which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen." And to this intimation the Church of Christ, constituting all his true disciples, instantly and heartily responds in the person and by the mouth of John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." Millenarians are as confident that our Lord here refers to his coming personally to establish a visible kingdom on earth, whose affairs shall be administered personally by himself, as if a special revelation to that effect had been made to them from a celestial source. I,

on the other hand, firmly maintain that the allusion is to the coming of Christ at the day of universal and final judgment. And this rendering of the passage, it is right to mention, had never—not at least so far as I am aware—been questioned until within the last fifty or sixty years, when Millenarianism, after having been in its grave for fifteen centuries, was exhumed, and had the breath of life breathed into it again. But our Millenarian brethren not only do not receive the opinions of commentators, however eminent and however sound in the faith they may be regarded by all other evangelical Christians, but they will not even give them a hearing. They are right in not receiving mere human expositions or interpretations of Scripture as authoritative; but I think that, as God has given special gifts to some, which he has withheld from others, and as all of us may learn something from each other—which every one who has been present at a Bible reading will admit—there surely could be no harm in knowing what the views of these good and gifted men are on particular parts of the Word of God.

But I have said that I feel a thorough persuasion that in the last verse but one of the closing chapter of Scripture, our Lord refers to his coming to our world for the purpose of judging and fixing the eternal destiny of all mankind. In order that the correctness of this interpretation may be placed beyond all doubt, in the minds of those who are not inaccessible to the force of evidence in consequence of a preconceived theory, let me bespeak especial attention to the words of our Lord when he says:—"He who testifieth these things." Now, what were the things which Christ had testified? In the tenth and eleventh verses we have "these things," among those which Jesus "testified." "The time," says our Lord to the angel, "is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." All this obviously refers to the day of general judgment. The righteous and the wicked are here equally and simultaneously judged, and whatever one's character shall then be, his destiny through

all eternity will be fixed in accordance with it. But if further evidence were required on the point, it would be found in the twelfth verse: "And, behold," says Jesus, "I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." This so plainly refers to a judicial procedure, or assize, that I feel, as it were, embarrassed in having to undertake to show by argument that it is so. By the reward of every man, is to be understood, not alone the perfect bliss which will be the eternal portion of the righteous, but the destiny which will be assigned to the wicked. This view accords with the meaning which attaches to the word reward in various other parts of Scripture, both in the Old and New Testament, where it means condemnation or punishment. In this latter sense the word was used by our Lord himself, when, in the fifth verse of the sixth chapter of the Gospel by Matthew, he says, speaking of hypocrites, "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men.

Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." Now, unless there were a judicial investigation of every man's character and conduct previous to the reward, it could not be said, as it is in this passage by Christ, "My reward is with me, to give every man *according* as his work shall be." But, as this is among the things which Jesus says in the twentieth verse he testifies in connection with his coming a second time to our earth, that coming must of necessity be, not to reign personally on earth, but to judge the whole of mankind, and to pass on each individual a sentence according to what his work has been, which shall be eternal in its operation.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST—CONCLUDING
OBSERVATIONS ON THE SUBJECT.

THERE are some other passages in the New Testament which modern Millenarians press into the service of their system, which the Millenarians of former times never thought of citing in confirmation of their opinions in relation to the coming of Christ to reign personally on earth. But I should have to devote more space to this section of the volume than can be spared, in justice to the varied aspects of Millenarianism which remain to be viewed, were I to go into a consideration of all these portions of Holy Writ. I shall confine my attention to two of these passages, because they are so well known to all readers of the Gospels. The first is a part of our Lord's

Prayer. I am sure that those readers who are not conversant with Millenarian books, and are unacquainted personally with Millenarians, will be surprised, if not somewhat startled, when I mention this. They will mentally, if not audibly, say, that the Lord's Prayer is the last place in which they would have expected to find Millenarianism. Still the fact is as I have stated. The petition in that prayer, which they contend is thoroughly Millenarian, is that which Christ instructed his disciples to use, as expressed in the words, "Thy kingdom come." Now, first of all, it is deserving of notice, that our Lord did not on this occasion instruct his disciples to pray for the coming of his *own* kingdom. The prayer is addressed to God the Father, not to God the *Son*. It is, therefore, for the coming of the kingdom of the Father, not that of the Son, that we are here taught to pray. I attach great importance to this point, because we all know that the kingdom which is to be set up on our earth, on the asserted coming of Christ to reign personally on earth, is to be emphatically *his* kingdom. No amount of ingenuity,

therefore, can make an explicit prayer to *God* that *his* kingdom may come, apply to a personal coming of *Christ* to our world for the purpose of establishing a visible kingdom. I know of no portion of Scripture which I should suppose less liable to misconstruction than our Lord's Prayer. Its simplicity is as striking as its sublimity. It is so plain that the mass of mankind may, without an effort, comprehend its meaning. And accordingly, until within the last few years, when Millenarians have been in search of new supports to their system, not one of the many hundreds of millions, who have daily repeated that prayer in the intervening eighteen centuries since Christ taught it to his disciples, has ever imagined for a moment that the petition, "Thy kingdom come," was a prayer for the personal advent of Christ to establish a visible kingdom on earth. It must be a very painful reflection to Millenarians, that the meaning of our Lord should have been in this case so greatly misconceived. And, indeed, if the Millenarians are right in their construction of the petition, "Thy kingdom come," every Christian ought

to feel grieved that *all* who have professed Christianity during the eighteen centuries of its history, have been using this prayer in a sense in which our Lord never meant it should be understood. All Christendom for these eighteen hundred years has construed the words as a prayer for the extension and ultimate universal prevalence of the principles of the Gospel, and for their uniform practical exemplification in the lives of those who professed to be the followers of Jesus.

But if there could have been the slightest semblance of a doubt that this was the right construction of the words, it must have been swept away by the petition which follows. "Thy will," adds our Lord, "be done on earth as it is in heaven." This is, indeed, only a repetition of the preceding sentence, though in different words. The coming of God's kingdom, and the doing of his will on earth as it is done in heaven, are convertible sentences. Just in proportion as God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven, in that proportion has the kingdom of God come; and when God's will is universally done on

earth as it is in heaven, then will the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ. And then, let me add, will the world be truly blessed with a Millennium,—though not such a Millennium as the upholders of the theory of Christ's personal reign on earth are labouring to prepare the religious world to expect.

Another passage of Scripture which the Millenarians press into their service requires a brief examination. They even convert the prayer which the thief on the cross addressed to our Lord into an argument in favour of their views. I allude to this argument in favour of Millenarianism, not because I attach sufficient importance to it to feel that it requires serious refutation, but rather for the purpose of showing what wonderful ingenuity Millenarians display in discovering Scriptural supports to their system. “Lord,” said the thief, “remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” If ever language was so precise as to preclude the possibility of its being interpreted in more than one way, it surely is this; and indeed until within the last twenty or thirty years

no second construction was put upon it. By universal consent it was allowed to mean the kingdom of Christ in heaven; but modern Millenarians have discovered another meaning in it, and one which, as a matter of course, favours their theory of the personal reign of Christ on earth. Lest I should be suspected of unwittingly representing Millenarians as entertaining notions which they would disclaim, it is right I should give their own words on this point. I have before spoken of the Rev. W. J. Brooks as one of the most popular Millenarian writers some twenty years ago, and as being still considered one of the greatest authorities among them. Indeed my special attention has been called by an able Millenarian to Mr. Brooks' writings on the ground of their being unusually judicious. Well, then, let us listen to what he says relative to the prayer of the thief on the cross. In his volume entitled "Essays on the Advent and Kingdom of Christ, and the Events connected Therewith," we read as follows:—"The prayer of the thief upon the cross, 'Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom,' conveys the

impression to some, that Jesus entered into his kingdom at his decease. The reply is short: the original Greek is not, ‘when thou comest *into* thy kingdom,’ but ‘when thou comest *in* thy kingdom;’ thus confirming the view already taken of the kingdom and second advent being contemporaneous. And a marvellous proof it is, that the poor sinner on the cross spake by a powerful Divine illumination at this time; since, at a moment when even the disciples of Jesus were confounded by the circumstance of his humiliation, and thought their hopes gone, he, on the contrary, could see through the sufferings to the glory, and was persuaded that He, whom they were crucifying, would again appear in the majesty of his kingdom.”

I am perfectly certain that if I should number among my readers any one who is wholly unacquainted personally with Millenarians, and has never met with any of their works, he could not have thought it possible that such an exposition as I have just quoted could have been given of the prayer of the thief on the cross. And what would add to his surprise

would be the fact that this mode of expounding that prayer has been adopted by a Millenarian, whose writings are generally regarded by those who share his Millenarian views, as generally able and judicious. If ever language was incapable of more than one construction, it surely was that of the dying thief. It expressed his perfect conviction that Christ was about to enter into his kingdom ; and his earnest desire that he should be with him there. But if there could be a doubt of this being the right construction of the language of the thief, the answer of Jesus to the prayer thus addressed to him, must instantly and entirely dissipate that doubt. “ To-day,” were the words of our Lord, “ to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” The reception of the thief that very day—most probably in a few minutes—into heaven was the practical construction which our Lord put on the words of the thief ; for the term Paradise is synonymous with that of heaven. The thief, therefore, was made perfectly blessed the very hour he entered the celestial kingdom of Christ, which kingdom, in his character as God, was his from all

eternity. There was a sense in which our Lord might have been said to enter his kingdom in his mediatorial character, when he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. Before he did that, he could say, and did say, "It is finished:" that is, he had completed the work of man's redemption which his Father had given him to do, and therefore had both a legal and a covenant right to that mediatorial kingdom which was to be his reward. In, however, the highest sense of the words, Jesus took possession of his mediatorial throne when he ascended visibly up to heaven forty days after his resurrection.

But to return to the thief on the cross. To suppose, as Mr. Brooks here does, that the very moment he believed on Christ, and was therefore converted, he became a Millenarian; and that his thoughts, overleaping an intervening period of at least nearly two thousand years, were centred on the Second Advent of his Lord to reign personally on earth,—is, I feel persuaded, one of the most fanciful and one of the most far-fetched ideas that ever entered the mind of any one having the repu-

tation, among a certain circle of Christian friends, of being a judicious as well as able divine. To attempt a serious or elaborate confutation of the notion, is a thing I could not bring myself to do. I will only say, that if correct, all others of whose equally sudden conversions we read in the New Testament, ought, like the thief on the cross, to have become instantaneous Millenarians. Zaccheus, the Philippian jailor, and the three thousand who heard the Pentecostal sermon of Peter, experienced with equal suddenness the saving change. And their conversion—and I might have mentioned other equally instantaneous conversions—was no less the result of “a powerful Divine illumination” than the conversion of the thief on the cross. Will, then, Mr. Brooks or any other Millenarian contend that all those who experienced this grand instantaneous spiritual transformation, were at the same moment converted to Millenarianism as well? I venture to say that there is not a Millenarian now alive on the earth, who, if appealed to, would say that he became a Millenarian contemporaneously with

his conversion to Christ. And the same may be said with equal confidence of the thief on the cross. The coming of Christ in the "majesty of his kingdom," in the Millenarian sense of the phrase, never entered his mind, nor that of any other saved sinner, at the time of his conversion.

Before I conclude my observations on the Coming of our Lord, it is right I should make some remarks on an opinion which is very prevalent, and still growing, among Millenarians. I allude to the conviction which the majority of their number entertain that in every instance in which Christ is spoken of as coming, the reference is to his literal or *personal* Advent. By adopting this course they believe that they greatly strengthen their case for our Lord's visible coming to reign Millennially on the earth. On this point they not only profess to be persuaded themselves, but they are uncharitable—I speak of them of course as a body—towards those who cannot concur with them in opinion. Among well-known Millenarian authors who speak in very emphatic language on the point, I may men-

tion the names of the Rev. W. J. Brooks and the Rev. Capel Molyneux. It is not necessary I should quote their words. It will suffice that I mention the fact. Now, I hold that this opinion is not only not supported by Scripture, but that it is at variance with the whole Word of God.

Christ comes in various other ways than visibly or personally. He came when he commenced his public ministry on earth. To the sense, which is not personal, in which Christ is said to have come when he commenced his public ministry on earth, I will only make a brief allusion. To what John the Baptist, the forerunner of our Lord, said on this point, the four evangelists—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—severally advert. Matthew quotes the words of the Baptist in reference to the coming of Christ, in this sense, in the following words:—"I indeed baptise with water unto repentance; but he"—namely, Christ—"that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose." The language of Mark on the point is not only essentially the same, but with very

little difference in terms. The same may be said of that of Luke and of John. So far as regarded Christ's coming in the flesh, this had occurred nearly thirty years before John the Baptist made this announcement. The announcement was made on the eve of our Lord's entrance on his public ministry; and the terms "cometh" and "coming" demonstrably applied exclusively to his coming in that sense. Our Lord himself speaks to the same effect in various parts of the evangelistic records. It is evident that it was to his coming in the sense of his public ministry, that he says in the thirty-fourth verse of the ninth chapter of the Gospel of John, "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind." Men could only see or fail to see whether Christ was the Messiah or not when, after nearly thirty years spent in the bosom of his family, he emerged from obscurity, and went forth on his glorious mission of mercy to mankind. Here, then, are proofs not to be controverted that our Lord came in a sense at variance with

the Millenarian notion that his coming is never mentioned in the New Testament in any other than as a strictly personal coming. He could not have come from heaven on these occasions—and Millenarians recognise no personal coming of Christ, except from heaven—because he had been nearly thirty years an inhabitant of the world before the passage in question could relate to him.

Christ comes in grace, and he comes in providence also. He comes in grace whenever the Holy Spirit accomplishes the work of conversion in the heart of the sinner. Hence he spoke to his disciples, before his crucifixion, of sending the Holy Ghost to convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. And do not Millenarians themselves dwell on the reception, by faith, of Christ Jesus? And better still, does not Paul use the expression, and employ it as a prayer, that Christ might dwell by faith in the hearts of those to whom he was at the time addressing himself? Now, the very fact of dwelling necessarily implies that Christ had previously come, that is, had come in a spiritual sense.

Our Lord emphatically came on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit wrought so mightily as to convert three thousand persons by means of one sermon preached by Peter; and when the promise, partially fulfilled on that notable occasion, shall be universally fulfilled by the outpouring of the Spirit on all flesh, that will, indeed, be a glorious coming, in this sense, of the Lord to our earth.

As another instance of Christ's coming by his Spirit I would point to the first verse of the ninth chapter of the Gospel by Mark. Speaking to a large general concourse of people, as well as to his disciples, Jesus is there represented as saying, "Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." It would surely be a self-evident misinterpretation of these words to make them convey any other idea than that of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; for Christ, we know, has not come again personally to our world since the language in question proceeded from his lips. That Christ comes in a spiritual sense to our world is abundantly

evident from another class of New Testament Scripture. It is obviously in this sense that we are to understand the words of our Lord, spoken by him to his sorrowing disciples immediately before his crucifixion. "I will not," he saith, in the eighteenth verse of the fourteenth chapter of John's Gospel, "leave you comfortless : I will come to you." The whole of what precedes and follows in this chapter conclusively proves that our Saviour here meant his coming by the Spirit, not in a personal sense. So when he delivered his commission to his disciples to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, adding, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,"—the presence of our Lord thus promised was a spiritual, not a personal presence. Had a personal presence been meant, there must have been very many comings of Christ, for the disciples *came* to the places they visited, and if Christ was always with them he must have come too. But this, we know, he was not in a personal sense. The same may be said in relation to that other expression of our Lord's—

“Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them.”

In the sense of Christ's coming by the Holy Spirit, we have a striking illustration in the twentieth verse of the third chapter of the Revelation, where he himself thus speaks:—
 “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.” Now will any Millenarian venture to maintain either that this is no coming of Christ at all, or that it is a personal coming in this sense of the word? And if not, ought not the fact to open the eyes of all Millenarians to the insuperable difficulties in which they are placed by their creed?

I greatly regret that it should be necessary for me to have to argue on this point with Millenarians whose views on other aspects of Divine truth are entirely sound, and whose Christian graces shed a lustre on their character as the followers of Christ. But I feel it my duty, just because they occupy so high a place in the religious world, to combat what I regard as an error of no ordinary importance,

and which is made all the more so, because of the purpose to which they seek to turn it, and to which I will advert before I close this part of my subject.

The Old Testament contains numerous instances in which the Lord is spoken of as “coming” to our world, which demonstrably means, not a personal or visible coming, but a coming in providence. “Stir up thy strength,” says David in the second verse of the eightieth Psalm, “and *come* and save us.” The Psalmist did not here supplicate or expect the personal presence of the Lord when he put up this prayer. It was a purely providential interposition on his behalf that he asked and looked for. That, indeed, is made clear as the light of day from one word,—“Stir up thy *strength* and come and save us.” No less plainly was it a providential coming of God that the Prophet Isaiah had in his eye when, in the fourth verse of the thirty-first chapter of his book he expressed himself thus:—“Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold your God will *come* with vengeance: even God with a recompence: he

will *come* and save you." Here God is explicitly represented as coming with or in "vengeance" as regards his and his people's enemies, but with a "recompence" or reward to his saints. The same may be said of the coming of the Lord spoken of in the tenth verse of the fortieth chapter of the same book, where we read:—"Behold the Lord God will *come* with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him." So, too, are we to understand the words of Isaiah in the fifteenth verse of the last chapter of his book, where we read:—"For behold the Lord will *come* with fire, and with his chariots like a whirlwind, to render his anger with fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire." Passing over various other passages to the same effect which are to be found in the intervening prophets, we read as follows in the fifth and sixth verses of the fourth chapter of Malachi:—"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of

the children to their fathers, lest I *come* and smite the earth with a curse." We have thus in the closing words of the Old Testament a declaration that unless the hearts of those to whom the prophet referred were changed, God would *come* and smite the earth with a curse.

It were easy to transfer to my pages various passages from the New Testament in which Christ's coming to our world is to be understood only in the sense of his coming to inflict punishment, or to bestow reward. One or two will suffice. In the twenty-third verse of the tenth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, Christ is represented by that Evangelist as saying to his disciples—"But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be *come*." Christ had come personally already when he spake these words; and he could not possibly have here referred to his second personal coming to our earth, because he distinctly says, that the disciples, to whom he then addressed himself, should not have gone over the cities

of Israel until he had come. The cities of Israel were not many in number, nor were they scattered over an extensive tract of country, or of difficult access; and, consequently, in all probability, only a few years at furthest could elapse before the coming here spoken of had taken place. At all events, the intervening period could not, in the nature of things, have extended beyond the term of the natural lives of the disciples whom he at this time addressed. The coming of Christ, therefore, here referred to must have meant a coming to punish those who were at this time persecuting his people, and to reward the latter for their fidelity to his cause, and their devotion to his service.

I have already in a previous chapter quoted another passage, though partly for the purpose of proving another point, which places, in my judgment, the fact of Christ's coming again to our world for other objects than to establish by his personal presence a Millennial kingdom on earth. The passage to which I allude is the one in which our Lord says to his disciples, "Verily I say unto you, there

be some standing here who shall not taste of death until they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." I hold that no language which could be employed could more conclusively establish the fact of a coming of Christ to our world in other than a personal manner, than that which constitutes the passage in question. But having already adverted to the passage, I will not do more than make this passing allusion to it.

In the sixteenth verse of the second chapter of Revelation, Christ thus addresses the Church in Pergamos:—"Repent; or else I will *come* unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth." Could anything be more plain than that this verse records a coming of Christ? or could anything be more manifest than the fact that it is a spiritual coming that is meant, for the purpose of inflicting punishment, if Christ's words should be unheeded,—not a personal coming of our Lord? In the third verse of the third chapter of the same book Christ says to the Church at Sardis:—"Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and

repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." Could language more plainly express the fact of a spiritual coming of our Lord to inflict punishment on a certain contingency? Could any amount of ingenuity torture the words into an affirmation of the personal coming of Christ to our earth?

With regard to the spiritual coming of Christ, the fact that he does come in that sense may be illustrated by the analogical case of men coming to him in the same spiritual sense. Was it not the language of our Lord when on earth, "*Come* unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?" Now, no one ever supposed that when Jesus thus invited miserable sinners to come to him, he meant that they should come to him personally. No Millenarian will construe our Lord's gracious language in that sense. The invitation was obviously intended to convey the idea—and never was understood otherwise—of coming to him spiritually or by faith. The same principle of interpretation

applies to the words of Christ on another occasion when, grieved that those whom he addressed would not receive the salvation which he pressed on their acceptance, he said, "Ye will not *come* to me that you might have life." So, too, all readers of Scripture understand those other words of Jesus, "All that the Father giveth me shall *come* to me." "No man can *come* to me except the Father draw him." "If any man thirst, let him *come* to me and drink." Now, if our Lord thus so often invited men to "come" to him, in the spiritual acceptation of the word, surely no one can object to the reasonableness of our belief that he comes in the same sense to believers.

But there is another sense, not personal, in which our Lord may, with the strictest propriety, be said to come to our world. He comes to all believers when they are called away from this earth to their home in heaven. David had a firm and blessed conviction of the coming of God to him at the time of his death; and in the contemplation of the precious fact he expressed himself in words which have been the source of inconceivable comfort, in the

prospect of a dying hour, to countless millions of God's people since his day. "Though," says the Psalmist, addressing himself to God, "though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil ; for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

I may here pause for a moment parenthetically to mention that, some time after I had written thus far, I met with the following passage in one of John Bunyan's works, which is not only full of comfort, but so much in accordance with my views on this particular sense of Christ's coming, that I cannot refrain from transferring it to my pages. "If," says the author of "The Pilgrim's Progress," "death did come alone to us, it would be terrible to us indeed. Its ghastly countenance would affright us ; but here is the comfort, that Christ, our dearest Lord, will *come* with death, to sweeten it to us, and support us under it. This prevented David's fear : 'When I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.' O welcome death when Christ comes with it ! This bitter

cup, of which we must all drink, is brought to us by the hand of our dearest Lord; this last stroke is given by the hand of love; it is a taking us home to our Father's house: this last enemy hath Christ conquered for us."

Christ also comes to his people at death, in a representative sense, in the persons of his angels, who are present at the last moments of all his followers to carry their souls to glory,—just as he himself represented the angels as having carried away the soul of Lazarus to place it in Abraham's bosom in Paradise. It is an important fact in connection with the coming of Christ in this sense, that dying believers, conscious that their end is near, and exhausted by bodily infirmities and sufferings, are often heard to pray that Christ would be pleased to "come" and take them to himself. And it is quite a common expression among mourning Christians that God or Christ had come and taken their friends to himself. I may further remark that if, as the Prophet Isaiah tells us in the first verse of the fifty-seventh chapter of his book, the righteous are taken away from the evil to come, it is by God or

Christ coming so to take them away ; for death in the case of all the members of the human family is as much the act of God as is the birth of every child that comes into the world.

I have now finished my examination of all the leading portions of Scripture on which Millenarians ground their conviction that Christ is to come personally a second time to our earth to erect a throne and establish a kingdom on it. It will have been seen that there is scarcely a single passage of Scripture which the church has been accustomed to adduce in proof of a general judgment, which the advocates of the personal reign of our Lord do not apply to the confirmation of their belief in his personal reign in the world. Just only reflect for a moment on what would be involved in the circumstance were this appropriation of the passages of Scripture in question justified by the fact. In that case, we should have very little, if any ground for believing in a universal and final judgment of the world at all. Indeed, some Millenarians do almost throw doubts as to there being any judgment day in the sense in which the phrase is usually understood. One of the

two authors of the work entitled, "Eight Lectures on Prophecy," to which I have referred in my history of Millenarianism, goes so far as to express a doubt whether a single allusion can be found in the Old Testament to a day of general judgment. Inferentially we may come to the conclusion that he would apply the same observation to the New Testament. Lest I should be suspected of misunderstanding the words of this Millenarian writer, I think it will be better to quote them. Adverting to the words of Peter in the Acts, where he says, in relation to certain future events, "which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his prophets since the world began," our Millenarian author says:—"Has God spoken of the final judgment at the end of the world by the mouth of all his prophets?" He answers his own question in the negative; and then he adds, "It may be questioned whether he has spoken of that event anywhere in the *Old Testament*." This shows to what astounding lengths some Millenarians, in their zeal on behalf of their system, are prepared to go. I confess I stand aghast at the remark

in question. If the sentiment which it expresses be true, then it follows that those who lived under the Old Testament dispensation, and were privileged to possess the oracles of God, lived and died in utter ignorance of the momentous truth, that there will, at the end of the world, be a final judgment of all mankind.

If I have gone at great length into an examination of those passages of Scripture which the Millenarians adduce in support of that part of their system which relates to the Second Coming of Christ to our earth, I have done so because the personal reign of our Lord is the foundation on which they build the entire Millenarian edifice. To the other leading characteristics of Millenarianism it will not be necessary that I should advert at equally great length; but I trust I shall be able to show conclusively, though more briefly, in my next and concluding volume, that there is no more authority in the Word of God for them, than for the personal reign of Christ on earth.

THE END.

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